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The Cambridge Bible for Schools.

JONAH.



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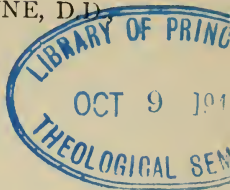
A MAP  
TO ILLUSTRATE THE  
BOOK OF JONAH

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# The Cambridge Bible for Schools

GENERAL EDITOR:—J. J. S. PEROWNE, D.D.

DEAN OF PETERBOROUGH.



## JONAH,

*WITH NOTES AND INTRODUCTION*

BY

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\* \* The Text adopted in this Edition is that of Dr Scrivener's *Cambridge Paragraph Bible*. A few variations from the ordinary Text, chiefly in the spelling of certain words, and in the use of italics, will be noticed. For the principles adopted by Dr Scrivener as regards the printing of the Text see his Introduction to the *Paragraph Bible*, published by the Cambridge University Press.



## INTRODUCTION.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE AUTHOR.

1. THERE is no reason to doubt that Jonah was himself the author of the book which bears his name. There is nothing inconsistent with that view in the contents of the book. No other satisfactory theory of authorship has been suggested. The candour of the writer, supposing him to be relating his own history, finds a parallel in the case of other inspired writers both in the Old and New Testaments. The graphic style of the book harmonises with the vigorous and resolute character of Jonah as portrayed in its pages.

2. Of Jonah himself very little is known beyond what we gather from this book. There is however one other mention of him in the Old Testament, which furnishes us with some particulars concerning him. In 2 Kings xiv. 25, we read of Jeroboam II, king of Israel, that "he restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which He spake by the hand of His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher." It can hardly be doubted that the Jonah thus spoken of is the same person as the Jonah of this book. Both are prophets. Both are sons of Amittai. And when it is remembered that neither the name Jonah, nor the name Amittai, occurs anywhere else in the Old Testament, it appears most improbable that there should have been two distinct persons, both prophets, both bearing the same un-

common name, and both sons of a father with the same uncommon name<sup>1</sup>.

3. Assuming then, as we may reasonably do, their identity, we learn from the passage in Kings,

(a) That Jonah was a prophet of the Northern kingdom (Israel);

(b) That his birthplace was Gath-hepher<sup>2</sup>, a town of Lower Galilee, not far from Nazareth, in the tribe of Zabulon;

(c) And that he exercised the prophetic office, either before the reign of Jeroboam II. or very early in that reign<sup>3</sup>.

He would thus be a contemporary of Hosea<sup>4</sup> and Amos<sup>5</sup>, if indeed he was not earlier than they, and therefore one of the most ancient, if not the most ancient of the prophets whose writings we possess.

<sup>1</sup> Jonah means *a dove*, Amittai, *true*. The latter name, which is thought by some to be identical with Matthew, has given rise to the tradition that Jonah was the son of the widow of Zarephath, whom Elijah raised to life, and on receiving whom at his hands she said, "Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is *truth*," 1 Kings xvii. 24. An equally uncertain tradition makes him also "the boy who attended Elijah to the wilderness," and "the youth who anointed Jehu."

<sup>2</sup> Called Gittah-hepher, Josh. xix. 13. It is in all probability the same as the modern village of el-Meshhad, where by a constant tradition from the time of Jerome to the present day, the tomb of Jonah is pointed out. See Smith's *Bib. Dict.* Art. *Gath-hepher*, and Pusey *Commentary on Jonah*, Introd. p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ewald writes: "It follows clearly from the words in 2 Kings xiv. 25—27 that this Jonah uttered the prediction neither long before nor long after the accession of Jeroboam II., especially as the king, according to all appearance, won his great victories very early. Jonah's prediction therefore must fall in with the childhood of Jeroboam or in the first commencement of his reign." *Hist. of Israel*, vol. IV. p. 124, note 1. Carpenter's Translation. According to the ordinary chronology Jeroboam's reign was from B.C. 823 to B.C. 782.

<sup>4</sup> Hosea i. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Amos i. 1.



## CHAPTER II.

## HISTORICAL CHARACTER OF THE BOOK.

1. The thoughtful student of the book of Jonah cannot fail to observe that it differs in some important particulars from the other prophetic writings of the Old Testament.

(a) In form it is a story and not a prophecy. It is an account of what befel a prophet, and not a record of his predictions.

(b) In style it is almost dramatic. Its teaching, whatever it may be, is rather acted before our eyes than uttered for our ears.

(c) Moreover, the miraculous or supernatural element enters in an unusual degree into the contents of this book. Seldom, if ever, do we find so many and so great wonders accumulated in the compass of so brief a narrative.

The question has accordingly been raised, whether this book is not rather to be regarded as an allegory or parable or romance, either founded on fact, or altogether independent of any real basis, than as a history of what actually happened.

2. It can hardly be doubted that this question really owes its origin to the miraculous character of the book of Jonah. Amongst the principal advocates of the non-historical theory of the book are those who deny the possibility of miracles. With a marvellous amount of ingenuity, but with an entire want of agreement among themselves, these writers have proposed a great variety of interpretations of the book of Jonah, including even the suggestion, of which it would be difficult to say whether it be more improbable or more irreverent, that it

is to be regarded as a Jewish adaptation of a heathen mythical legend<sup>1</sup>.

3. Without going however to any such lengths as these, without doubting the possibility of miracles, or denying the canonicity and inspiration of the book of Jonah, it may still be open to us to consider the question of its historical character. May it not be, we may ask, all that the most devout Christian holds it to be, and yet be not a history, but a divinely originated parable or allegory?

4. To the question thus modified it may be objected in reply, that even in this form it is really suggested by the miracles with which this book abounds. But for them, it may well be doubted whether anyone would ever have taken the book of Jonah to be anything but history. Are then the miracles, for into this the enquiry resolves itself, really such as to warrant the question? We think not. When fairly examined they lose much of that character of the merely marvellous, which to a cursory and mistaken view they have some of them appeared to wear. By such probable explanations as will be given of each of them in its place below, they may be brought properly within the sphere of the Gospel miracles themselves, as being for the most part accelerations and adaptations of the known powers and processes of nature, the normal, if extraordinary working, as Holy Scripture reveals it to us, of a living and ever-present God. And if this be so, then the question falls to the ground together with the supposed necessity for asking it.

5. But even were it otherwise, were there anything in these pages which when rightly explained lay beyond the sphere of humble and intelligent faith, are we really gainers by transferring them from the region of history to that of parable or allegory? It is not the wont of the sacred writers to make use of portents or prodigies in their allegorical or parabolic teaching. It is

<sup>1</sup> The story of Perseus and Andromeda, in one or other of its forms or modifications. The whole theory is fully stated and as fully refuted by Dr Pusey, Introduction to *Commentary on Jonah*, pp. 261—263.

one of the recognised distinctions between canonical and apocryphal writings, that whilst the latter often abound in legends and marvels, the former never transgress the limits of the possible, even in their figurative teaching. Even from a literary point of view, higher considerations apart, the allegorical character of the book of Jonah cannot be satisfactorily maintained. On that hypothesis it is out of harmony as a whole. What may be called the setting of the allegory is too exact, too detailed, too closely in accordance with facts, to be in keeping with the allegory itself. The book is composed of two elements which will not properly fuse together. One whole section of it at least, Jonah's psalm of thanksgiving in the second chapter, is quite out of place. Most pertinent in a true history, it becomes in an allegory a discord and an intrusion.

6. Nor is it easy to understand why the writer of an allegory, free to choose his characters at will, should have selected a known prophet of God as the subject of so great misconduct and reprobation. If the introduction of a prophet were necessary, to heighten the contrast and to enforce the moral of his teaching, would not that end have equally been answered by a fictitious name, or by the omission of the name altogether? If Jonah did not act as this book represents him to have done, it is incredible that a Jewish writer should have ascribed conduct such as this to him, and that the fiction in which he ascribed it should have found a place in the Jewish Canon. This consideration is fatal to such a theory of the origin of the book of Jonah, as that which has been proposed by a recent commentator<sup>1</sup>. He supposes the book to be in form a kind of historical romance, written long after the time of Jonah, and founded either upon a tradition which credited Jonah "with a missionary journey to distant and powerful Nineveh," or upon a "real fact," a political "legation from the king of Israel to the king of Assyria," which however this later writer was unable to conceive of, except under a religious aspect, the moral re-

<sup>1</sup> Kalisch, *Bible Studies*, Part II, pp. 122, 123, 133, 134.

formation of the Assyrians to whom Jonah was sent. But when, in pursuit of this arbitrary theory, he comes to deal with the "ill-feeling" exhibited by Jonah, and asks, "Was the author justified in imputing to an old and honoured prophet such bitterness, nay, such meanness?" he has no better answer than this to give, "we must, therefore, ascribe that feature to the author himself, who thus wronged both his hero and his composition."

7. There remains however another argument for the historical character of the book of Jonah, which is the weightiest of all, and which would to a Christian mind appear to be of itself conclusive. In a well-known passage in the Gospels our Lord makes a double reference to the book of Jonah.

(a) To the request for a sign, addressed to Him by the Scribes and Pharisees, He replies, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth<sup>1</sup>." It is difficult to see how, if Jonah's incarceration in the fish were merely an allegory, it could have been referred to by our Lord in language such as this. The whole Old Testament history not excluding even its minor incidents was, as St Paul teaches us, allegorical<sup>2</sup>; allegorically intended by its divine Author, and to be interpreted allegorically by His Church. But to recognise this is not to invalidate the historical truth of the narrative. It is true history, but representative history; history which foretells throughout Christ and the good things to come. With this view the parallel which our Lord draws between what befel Jonah and what should befall Himself exactly coincides. There is no departure from the firm basis of historical fact on which our holy religion rests; no endangering the literal truth of the second member of the comparison by admitting the unreality of the first.

(b) But even if it were conceded that our Lord's

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xii. 39, 40.

<sup>2</sup> Galatians iv. 24.

words so far are compatible with the non-historic view, there follow in the same place other words of His, which are plainly repugnant to any such interpretation, "The men of Nineveh," He goes on to say, "shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here<sup>1</sup>." Is it possible to understand a reference like this on the non-historic theory of the book of Jonah? The future Judge is speaking words of solemn warning to those who shall hereafter stand convicted at His bar. Intensely real He would make the scene in anticipation to them, as it was real, as if then present, to Himself. And yet we are to suppose Him to say that imaginary persons who at the imaginary preaching of an imaginary prophet repented in imagination, shall rise up in that day and condemn the actual impenitence of those His actual hearers, that the fictitious characters of a parable shall be arraigned at the same bar with the living men of that generation.

On all these grounds then it would seem that the book of Jonah can only be regarded as actual history.

### CHAPTER III.

#### OBJECT OF THE BOOK.

1. It has been held by some, that the chief object of this book is to teach the nature and efficacy of true repentance. "So obvious," says a recent writer, "is the main idea which pervades the book and stamps it with the character of perfect unity—the idea of the wonderful power of true repentance—that it seems surprising that this point should ever have been mistaken, and should have called forth the most varied and

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xii. 41.

most fanciful views<sup>1</sup>." That we have in the book of Jonah two striking examples of repentance and its happy results, one of individual repentance in the case of Jonah himself and of his deliverance and restoration to his office and mission; the other of national repentance in the case of the Ninevites, and that they hold an important place in the moral teaching of the book, is undoubtedly true. The latter of them is thought worthy by our Lord Himself to be singled out from the history of the Old Testament as a typical example of repentance<sup>2</sup>. But to teach repentance is not the main object of this book. To regard it as such is to miss altogether the proper aim and design of the author. It is to leave unexplained the flight of Jonah and his reluctance to be the messenger of mercy to Nineveh. It is practically to expunge the last chapter of the book, and to make its teaching culminate in the words, "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not<sup>3</sup>." The lesson of repentance is only a part, however important, of the higher and wider lesson which this book is designed to teach us.

2. Still more prominent when we study the book as a whole is the object of the writer to shew in its true colours the unloving exclusiveness which too often characterised the Jew, and to rebuke the grudging narrow-mindedness that would deny all favour from the God of Israel to the Gentile world. It is the spirit of the elder brother in the parable that the author is commissioned to reprove. By that spirit Jonah was actuated, as he himself confesses (c. iv. 2.). It was the source of all that was unworthy in his conduct as here described. It was at the root of his disobedience at the first, and of his subsequent

<sup>1</sup> Kalisch, *Bible Studies*, Part II., The Book of Jonah, p. 265.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew xii. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Ch. iii. 10. One of these writers at least is candid enough to confess this consequence of his view. "It may be admitted," says Kalisch, "that if this chapter (iv.) were wanting, it would hardly have been missed, and that, without it, the story would have concluded almost as satisfactorily as it does in its present form."

displeasure. It prompted him to throw up his office as a prophet, and abandon his privileges as an Israelite, to relinquish alike the service and the favour of his God, rather than be His instrument of blessing to a heathen nation. It found vent in the ungenerous anger and petulant complaints, with which the unwelcome reprieve of the sentence on Nineveh was received by him. Taught by the discipline of God to see this spirit in its true light, he exhibits it (if as is most probable he was himself the author of this book) in his own personal history, in all its deformity and injustice, as a lesson to others. He exalts the Gentile in comparison of the Jew. He places the heathen sailors in the storm in favourable contrast with himself, the prophet of God, and by implication at least, the penitent Ninevites in like favourable contrast with impenitent Israel. With noble disregard of self he is content to pass out of view at the close of the book silenced and disgraced, that so he may the better point the moral with which he is charged. Yet not even this, taken alone and simply in itself considered, is the proper aim and object of the book of Jonah. Like the teaching of repentance, it is an integral part of a larger aim.

3. Three Acts, as it were, in a drama, three movements, so to speak, in an oratorio, this book contains. Each of them is full of interest, replete with instruction, the work of a master's hand. In the first, Jonah himself is the central figure. His conversion is its subject. At its commencement he is self-willed and refractory. At its close he is submissive and obedient. The Flight, the Storm, the Imprisonment in the fish, the Prayer, the Deliverance, are the several scenes in this Act. Its beginning and end are marked by the words, "Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh...but Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord" (c. i. 1—3); "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh...So Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord" (c. iii. 1—3). The second Act as we have called it concentrates our attention on "that great city" Nineveh. Its repentance and salvation are now the engrossing theme. In the simple



grandeur of its vast size, imagination being left to complete the picture, to fill in that great area with royal palaces and crowded marts and gardens and vineyards and parks and pleasancess, the city stands before us. Scene follows upon scene in quick and lifelike succession. The solitary stranger enters Nineveh as "a voice crying," not in the wilderness but in the city, no word or deed of his within its precincts recorded but this, that as he went he said "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." The scene changes. "Lamentation and mourning and woe" are heard in every quarter of that vast city, "All joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone." Costly apparel is exchanged for sackcloth. Sumptuous fare gives place to fasting. Even the lower animals are included in the universal sorrow and humiliation. Business and pleasure alike cease. Nineveh is one vast temple of penitence and prayer. Yet another and no less striking scene brings this act to a conclusion. Their prayer is heard, their repentance is accepted, their city is spared, the stream of their life purified and renewed returns to its accustomed course. The cloud that hung threateningly over their city is dispersed, and the sun shines forth upon it again. "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them : and He did it not" (c. iii. 10). But this, however morally grand and impressive, is not the climax of the history. The teaching of the book of Jonah does not end here. There remains another Act in which the prophet himself is again the chief character. Jonah displeased at the result of his mission, irritated and complaining, weary of life, and praying that he may die; Jonah sojourning in the hut which he has built him on the hill-side without the walls of the city, watching thence with evil eye the fortunes of Nineveh; Jonah exceeding glad of the shady plant which God had mercifully prepared to overshadow his booth and screen him from the heat, vexed and angry even unto death again when that welcome alleviation is withdrawn; Jonah convinced and silenced by the divinely-drawn contrast between his own selfish sorrow for a plant, and God's large and liberal pity for the



populous city of Nineveh—these are the scenes pourtrayed with the same brevity and vigour as before in this final Act or chapter of the work.

4. But the book of Jonah is complete as a whole as well as thus complete in its several parts. The three Acts make one drama, the three movements form one composition. For the true harmonising “idea,” which while it gives unity to the whole adds force and lustre to the several parts, we are indebted to the teaching of the New Testament. It is by the light of the later revelation that we discern the meaning and unity of this portion of the earlier. Our Lord, as we have seen already, regards Jonah as a type of Himself. He teaches us to see in this book an historical parable, a prophecy in act. As Jonah was swallowed by the fish, so Christ was laid in the heart of the earth. As Jonah after three days was cast up alive and unharmed on dry ground, so Christ rose again the third day from the dead. As Jonah went forth from his living prison to preach to the Ninevites (the only instance of a Jewish Prophet sent to the heathen), so Christ after His resurrection went forth, not in His own person, but by the agency of His Church, to preach the Gospel in all the world. The typical teaching of the book may be summed up, as has been said, in the words of St Paul, “That Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people (of Israel), and to the Gentiles<sup>1</sup>.” Thus the lesson of repentance and the rebuke of exclusiveness take a higher, because in fact a Christian form, while the claim of this book to a place in the canon of Old Testament prophecy is amply justified. The history of Jonah is a part of that great onward movement, which was before the Law and under the Law, which gained strength and volume as the fulness of the times drew near, but which could only find its consummation in the Incarnation and work of Him in whom all distinctions of country and race were to be for ever broken down, in Whose name repentance and remission of sins were to be preached among

<sup>1</sup> Matthew xii. 40, 41; Acts xxvi. 23.

all nations<sup>1</sup>, in Whom all nations of the earth were to be blessed, Who was to be at once a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel.

## CHAPTER IV.

### ANALYSIS OF CONTENTS.

The book of Jonah may conveniently be divided into four sections, corresponding almost exactly with the four chapters in our English Bibles.

*I. Jonah's disobedience and punishment, ch. i. 1—17.*

Jonah, sent on a divine mission to Nineveh, refuses to go, and takes ship to flee to Tarshish, i. 1—3.

Overtaken by a storm sent by God to arrest him in his flight, he is, at his own request, cast into the sea by the sailors, after all their efforts to save the ship have proved unavailing. The sea then becomes calm, i. 4—16.

*II. Jonah's prayer and deliverance, ch. i. 17—ii. 10.*

Swallowed alive by a great fish, prepared by God for the purpose, Jonah remains in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, i. 17.

He offers a prayer of thanksgiving for the deliverance from death by drowning already accorded him, mingled with confident expectation of yet further rescue, ii. 1—9.

At the command of God the fish casts him up on dry land, ii. 10.

*III. Jonah's preaching and its result, ch. iii.*

Profiting by the chastisement he has undergone, Jonah promptly obeys a second command to go to Nineveh, iii. 1—3.

He delivers there his startling message, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown," iii. 4.

The Ninevites believe God and repent, and the threatened judgment is averted, iii. 5—10.

*IV. Jonah's displeasure and its rebuke, ch. iv.*

This result of his mission displeases Jonah exceedingly, and he complains to God against it, iv. 1—4.

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 47.

Still hoping, as it would seem, that Nineveh may be overthrown, he constructs for himself a booth without the walls, and sits beneath its shade to watch the fate of the city, iv. 5.

God causes a shady plant to spring up quickly and cover his booth, so as to shelter him from the burning heat of the sun ; but the comfort thus afforded him is speedily withdrawn by the sudden withering of the plant, iv. 6, 7.

His grief for the loss of the plant is made the occasion by God of rebuking his want of pity for Nineveh, and of justifying His own merciful compassion in sparing that great city with its teeming population and exceeding much cattle, iv. 8—11.







# JONAH.

## 1—3. *Jonah's Disobedience.*

NOW the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of 1  
Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, *that* great city, 2  
and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up be-  
fore me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the 3  
presence of the LORD, and went down *to* Joppa; and he

### CH. I. 1—3. JONAH'S DISOBEDIENCE.

1. *Now the word, &c.*] Lit., “**And** the word,” &c. There is no reason to conclude from this that the Book of Jonah is only a fragment of a larger work. Many books of the Old Testament begin with “**And**.” In some cases (e.g. Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, 2 Samuel) they do so, because the writer wishes to mark the fact that the book so commencing is a continuation, a second or third volume so to speak, of what he has written before. In other cases, as here and in Ezekiel i. 1, the author begins his work with the words, “**And it was**,” “**And it came to pass**,” because, though he may have written nothing before himself, yet there is a reference *in his own mind* to the national records that had gone before, and he consciously takes up the thread of past history. See Maurer on Ezek. i. 1.

2. *Nineveh*] On the E. bank of the Tigris, the capital of the ancient kingdom and empire of Assyria, and “the most magnificent of all the capitals of the ancient world.” The building of it is mentioned as early as Gen. x. 11. In the time of Jonah it appears to have been at the zenith of its glory.

*that great city*] See note on c. iii. 3, and Note B.

3. *Tarshish*] Probably Tartessus, an ancient mercantile city of the Phœnicians, in the S. of Spain, of which the site is supposed to have been “between the two arms by which the Guadalquivir flowed into the sea.” See Smith’s *Bib. Dict.* Art. *Tarshish*. “God bid him go to Nineveh, which lay North-East from his home, and he instantly set himself to flee to the then furthest West.”—Pusey.

*from the presence of the Lord*] This may mean from standing before the Lord or being in His presence, as His servant or minister (Deut. x. 8,

Kings xvii. 1, Matthew xviii. 10, Luke i. 19. See Dr Pusey, *Commentary on Jonah*, p. 247, note d.); i. e. he renounced his office of prophet rather

found a ship going *to* Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.

than obey so unwelcome a command. It may, however, only refer to that special presence of God in the Holy Land, which all Jews recognised. Either view is compatible with a belief on the part of Jonah in the omnipresence of God (Ps. cxxxix.). It is said of Cain (Gen. iv. 16) that he "went out from the presence of the Lord" (and the Heb. phrase is the same as here), when he forfeited the favourable regard, together possibly with some local manifestation of the presence of the Almighty.

The reason of Jonah's disobedience is given by himself, ch. iv. 2. Knowing well the lovingkindness of God, he anticipated that He would spare the Ninevites on their repentance, and he could not bring himself to be the messenger of mercy to heathen, much less to heathen who (as the Assyrian inscriptions state) had already made war against his own people, and who as he may have known were destined to be their conquerors. See the statements of his probable contemporary, Hosea, ix. 3, xi. 5.

*Joppa*] Now Jaffa, the well-known port of Palestine on the Mediterranean. It was 50 miles from Gath-hepher.

"Jaffa is one of the oldest cities in the world. It was given to Dan (?), in the distribution of the land by Joshua, and it has been known to history ever since. It owes its existence to the low ledge of rocks, which extends into the sea from the extremity of the little cape on which the city stands, and forms a small harbour. Insignificant as it is and insecure, yet there being no other in all this coast, it was sufficient to cause a city to spring up around it even in the earliest times, and to sustain its life through numberless changes of dynasties, races and religions, down to the present hour. It was in fact the only harbour of any notoriety possessed by the Jews throughout the greater part of their national existence. To it the timber for both the temples of Jerusalem was brought from Lebanon; and no doubt a lucrative trade in cedar and pine was always carried on through it with the nations who had possession of the forests of Lebanon. Through it also nearly all the foreign commerce of the Jews was conducted until the artificial port of Cæsarea was built by Herod."

"The harbour, however, is very inconvenient and insecure. Vessels of any considerable burden must lie out in the open roadstead—a very uneasy berth at all times; and even a moderate wind will oblige them to slip cable and run out to sea, or seek anchorage at Haifa, sixty miles distant. The landing also is most inconvenient, and often extremely dangerous. More boats upset and more lives are lost in the breakers at the north end of the ledge of rocks that defend the inner harbour, than anywhere else on this coast. I have been in imminent danger myself, with all my family in the boat, and never look without a shudder at this treacherous port, with its noisy surf tumbling over the rocks, as if on purpose to swallow up unfortunate boats."—Thomson, *Land and Book*, pp. 514—516; see also Smith's *Bible Dict.* Art. *Joppa*.



# 4—16. *Jonah's Punishment. The Storm and its consequences.*

But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that *were* in the

## 4—16. JONAH'S PUNISHMENT. THE STORM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

No sooner does Jonah decide upon his course of action and think himself now secure of its accomplishment, than God arrests him by the judgment of the storm.

4. *sent out*] Lit., as in margin, **cast forth**, indicating the suddenness and violence of the storm. The same word occurs and is rendered "cast forth" in E. V. in vv. 5, 12, 15.

Josephus speaks of a violent wind called "the black North wind," which he says sometimes visited the sea off the coast of Joppa. And we read of "a tempestuous wind called Euroclydon" in another part of the same sea, which rushing down the highlands of Crete suddenly caught the ship in which St Paul was sailing, and brought on a tempest scarcely less severe than that to which Jonah was exposed (Acts xxvii. 14). The modern name *Levanter* is a witness to the prevalence of such winds in those seas.

*was like to be broken*] Lit., **thought to be broken**, as in the margin. A vivid image or personification in keeping with the graphic style of this book. The same word "broken," i.e. "broken up," or "broken in pieces," is used of a ship that is wrecked in 1 Kings xxii. 48. Comp. Acts xxvii. 41.

5, 6. The conduct of the heathen mariners stands in striking and favourable contrast with that of the Jewish prophet. They call upon their gods and use every effort to save the ship. He, moody, miserable, and weary with mental conflict and bodily fatigue, is sunk in deep sleep, and has to be roused to consciousness and prayer by the reproaches of the heathen captain.

5. *the mariners*] The Hebrew word is formed from the word for *salt*, and denotes those occupied with the salt sea. So we sometimes speak of a sailor as a "salt."

See note on next verse, and for the whole description of their terror and their prayer comp. Ps. cvii. 23—30; Matt. viii. 23—27.

*every man unto his god*] They were probably Phœnicians, who had the carrying trade between Joppa and Tarshish. This would account for their multiplicity of gods. The crew, however, may have been composed of men of different nations. Comp.

"All lost! to prayers, to prayers! All lost!"

Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Act I. Sc. v.

*the wares*] It is doubtful whether this includes the cargo. It may

ship into the sea, to lighten *it* of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep. So the shipmaster came to him, and said unto him,

only mean the furniture of the ship, moveables, spare tackling, etc. In St Paul's shipwreck a similar course was taken (Acts xxvii. 19), but the cargo was not thrown overboard till a later period (ver. 38). Jonah's ship may have been, like St Paul's, a corn ship. The export of corn from Joppa was very considerable. See 1 Kings v. 9; Ezek. xxvii. 17; Acts xii. 20.

*to lighten it of them*] Rather, **to lighten** (the burden) **from upon them** (the mariners), i. e. to make matters easier for them. Comp. Exod. xviii. 22, where the same Hebrew phrase is rendered "it shall be easier for thyself."

*the sides of the ship*] The Hebrew word is not the same as that rendered "ship" earlier in the verse. It occurs nowhere else in the O. T., but the verb from which it is derived signifies to 'cover' or 'board over' (1 Kings vii. 3, 7), so that it is probably used to denote that it was a *decked* vessel in which Jonah sailed, and that he had, as we should say, gone down below. The "sides of the ship" are what we should call the bottom of the ship, the part in which the two sides meet. The same expression is used of the innermost recess of a cave, the point of meeting of the two sides (1 Sam. xxiv. 3).

*was fast asleep*] Jonah had probably fallen asleep before the storm commenced, and slumbered too deeply to be roused by it, or by the commotion on board. Our Lord's sleep amidst the storm on the lake (Mark iv. 38) furnishes at once a comparison and a contrast. Kalisch quotes in illustration of the heavy sleep of sorrow the case of the disciples in the Garden; "He found them sleeping for sorrow," Luke xxii. 45; and the words of Sallust, "primo cura, dein, uti ægrum animum solet, somnus cepit," *Bell. Jug. c. 71*.

6. *the shipmaster*] Lit., **the chief of the sailors**, i. e. the captain. The word here for *sailors* (which is singular and used collectively) is not the same word as that rendered *mariners* in v. 5. It is formed from the Hebrew word for a rope, and means properly those who handle the ropes. Both words occur again (and it is the only other place in the O. T. where either of them is found) in the description of the maritime greatness of Tyre in Ezekiel xxvii. The word used in this verse is there rendered in vv. 8, 27, 29, *pilots*, and the mention of their wisdom in v. 8 has been thought to justify this distinction. It should be observed, however, that the contrast there is between mere *rowers* (for so, and not *mariners*, the other word in that verse should be rendered) who were hired from Sidon and Arvad, and *skilled sailors*, who were the product of Tyre herself. The word rendered *mariners* in v. 5 of this chapter and in Ezek. xxvii. 9, 27, 29, appears to be a more general word, including all seafaring persons. The Hebrews, not being a maritime nation, make but little use of nautical terms. We have in addition to the words just mentioned the expressions, "shipmen that had knowledge of the sea" (lit., "men of ships, knowing the

What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not.

And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us <sup>7</sup> cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil *is* upon

sea"), 1 Kings ix. 27 (comp. 2 Chron. viii. 18); "They that go down to the sea in ships," Psalm cvii. 23, or simply, "They that go down to the sea," Isaiah xlii. 10.

*What meanest thou, O sleeper?*] Lit., **What (is there) to thee, sleeping?** i.e. What reason hast thou for sleeping? The E.V. apparently takes the participle "sleeping" as a vocative, "O sleeper?" *What meanest thou by sleeping!* would perhaps be the best translation. It is an exclamation of indignant surprise at the unreasonableness of Jonah's conduct. The word for sleep here and in v. 5 means heavy or deep sleep, such as Adam's (Gen. ii. 21), or Sisera's (Judg. iv. 21). LXX.  $\tau\acute{\omicron}\sigma\upsilon\ \rho\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\chi\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ ;

*God*] This abstract use of the word (lit., "**the God**") immediately after "*thy God*" in this verse, and the mention in v. 6 that the mariners "cried every man unto *his* god," is remarkable. It would seem to imply, as Calvin argues, that behind and above the many gods whom the heathen invented for themselves, they retained the idea, vague perhaps and indistinct for the most part, but starting into prominence in times of danger and distress such as this, of one supreme God by whose providence the world is governed, and in whose hand are the life and safety of all men.

*will think upon us*] Some would render, "will brighten, or shine upon us," i.e. will be propitious or favourable to us; but there seems no reason to depart from the E.V.

7. Finding their prayers as unavailing as their efforts, the sailors conclude that the storm is sent upon them by the gods as a judgment for some crime committed by one of their number; and they proceed to cast lots to discover who the culprit is. Instances of a similar belief on the part of the heathen have been adduced from classical authors (see Rosenmüller and Maurer *in loc.*). A story is told by Cicero (*de Nat. Deor.* III. 37) of Diagoras, how that when he was on a voyage, and the sailors, terrified by a storm which had befallen them, charged him with being the cause of it, he pointed to other vessels in the same plight with themselves, and asked them whether they thought that they too carried Diagoras. Horace, in a well-known passage, affirms that he would not suffer a man, who had provoked the anger of the gods, to put to sea in the same boat with him, because the innocent in such cases were not unfrequently involved in a common punishment with the guilty (Hor. *Od.* lib. III. c. 2. 26—30). The truth, which underlay this wide spread conviction, is taught us in its pure form in such histories as those of Achan (Josh. vii.) and Jonathan (1 Sam. xiv. 36—46).

*for whose cause*] Lit., **on account of (that) which (refers) to whom,** i.e. on whose account. The same expression occurs in v. 12 ("*for my sake*"), and, though in the Hebrew in an uncontracted form, in v. 8

8 us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil *is* upon us; What *is* thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what *is* thy country? and of what people *art* thou? And he said unto them, I *am* a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and

*the lot fell upon Jonah*] An illustration of Prov. xvi. 33; comp. Josh. vii. 18; 1 Sam. xiv. 42. It is worthy of note that the use of the lot, though frequently mentioned and sanctioned in the O.T., and employed even after the Ascension in the choice of an Apostle to fill the place of Judas, never occurs in the Bible after the day of Pentecost. It would seem to have been superseded and rendered needless by the gift which conferred "a right judgment in all things."

8. *for whose cause*] The lot has detected Jonah, but they will not condemn him unheard. They will give him an opportunity of clearing himself, or like Achan (Josh. vii. 19), of making confession with his own lips. The judicial fairness and calmness of these heathen men, their abstinence from anger and reproach for the wrong done them, their sense of the sanctity of human life, their fear of punishing the innocent, are very strikingly brought out in the whole of this exciting scene.

"Even in their supreme danger the mariners were anxious not only to avoid all violence, but all haste. While the fury of the waves and the tempest constantly increased, and every instant was precious to those who prized their lives, they patiently instituted an investigation with almost judicial calmness. Though fully trusting to the reality of the decision by lot, they were resolved neither to execute the judgment without the offender's confession, nor to execute it in an arbitrary manner." Kalisch, who quotes the words of Philo: "One might see in the scene a terrible tribunal: for the ship was the court of justice, the judges were the sailors, the executioners were the winds, the prisoner at the bar was the prophet, the house of correction and prison of safe keeping was the whale, and the accuser was the angry sea."

*What is thine occupation, &c.*] This crowding together of questions in their excitement is very true to nature. It has been compared with the well-known passage in Virgil, *Æn.* viii. 112—114.

9. The emergency recalls Jonah to his true self. All the better part of his character now comes out. His conduct throughout the remainder of the chapter is dignified and manly, worthy of a servant and prophet of Jehovah.

*a Hebrew*] This is the name by which the Jews were known to *foreigners* (comp. the use of it by Juvenal and other classical writers). It is quite in keeping with Biblical usage that Jonah employs it in describing himself to the heathen sailors. Had he been addressing one of his own countrymen, he would have spoken of himself as an *Israelite*.

*I fear the Lord*] Rather, **I fear Jehovah**. They knew already

the dry *land*. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them. Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto

(v. 10) that he was a worshipper of Jehovah, and that he had offended Him, and was fleeing from His presence. But hitherto they had only looked upon Jehovah as a god, one of many, with whom they had no concern. Comp. Pharaoh's contemptuous question, "Who is Jehovah, that I should obey his voice, to let Israel go? I know not Jehovah, neither will I let Israel go." Ex. v. 2. Now, however, when Jonah added that Jehovah was the God of heaven, who had made the sea and the dry land, while the tempest raged still to confirm his words, "The men were exceedingly afraid."

10. *Why hast thou done this?*] Rather, **What is this that thou hast done?** A question not of enquiry, but of amazement and reproach. Comp. Gen. iv. 10.

11. *What shall we do unto thee?*] No doubt in their thus appealing to Jonah to tell them what was to be done, instead of at once ridding themselves of him as the acknowledged cause of their calamity, we may recognise their reverence for Jehovah, and in a measure also for His servant. At the same time it was only natural and reasonable that, having learned of him the cause, they should seek to know from him the cure of their trouble. "Since you are a worshipper of the most High and Almighty God, you ought to know how the anger of your God can be appeased."—Rosenm.

*may be calm unto us*] Lit., **may be quiet from upon us**, i. e. from pressing upon us and being hostile to us. The word used for being quiet or silent in this and the next verse only occurs beside in Ps. cvii. 30, of quiet after a storm at sea, and in Prov. xxvi. 20, of the ceasing of strife.

*wrought, and was tempestuous*] Lit., **was going and being tossed**, i. e. according to the Hebrew idiom, became increasingly tempestuous. So in Gen. viii. 3, "the waters returned from off the earth continually," is literally, "returned to go and to return," i. e. returned increasingly, or more and more.

12. *cast me forth into the sea*] "The question is raised whether Jonah ought of his own accord to have offered himself to death; for his doing so seems to be a sign of despair. He might, indeed, have surrendered himself to their will, but here he, as it were, incites them to the deed. *Cast me into the sea*, he says, for in no other way will you appease God, than by punishing me. He seems like a man in despair when he thus goes at his own instance to death. But without doubt Jonah recognised that he was divinely summoned to punishment. It is uncertain whether he then conceived a hope of preservation, whether,



you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest *is* upon  
 13 you. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring *it* to the  
 land; but they could not: for the sea wrought, and was  
 14 tempestuous against them. Wherefore they cried unto the  
 LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee,  
 let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us  
 innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased

that is, with a present confidence, he rested on the grace of God; but, however that be, one may gather that he goes forth to death because he perceives and is assuredly persuaded that he is in a manner summoned by the open voice of God. And so there is no doubt that he patiently undergoes the judgment which the Lord has brought against him."—Calvin.

13. *rowed hard*] Lit., **digged**. The word is used for digging or breaking through a wall, Job xxiv. 16; Ezek. xii. 5, 7. The figurative use of it does not occur again in the O. T., where, as has been before observed, the references to maritime affairs are very few, but the figure itself is common in other languages. Rosenm. compares the phrases "infindere sulcos," "arare aquas," "scindere freta." Virg. *Æn.* v. 142, Ovid, *Trist.* III. *Eleg.* XII. 36, *Metamorph.* XI. 463. They used their utmost endeavours to bring her to land again, but in vain, for the tempest, so far from abating, only raged more furiously.

14—16. The openness of these heathens to religious impressions; the readiness with which they acknowledged Jehovah (hitherto to them an unknown God), and addressed no longer to their own gods (*v.* 5), but to Him their most earnest and humble prayers; their submission to His will (*v.* 14), and the worship which they subsequently paid and promised Him (*v.* 15), are all brought out in bold relief, and in strong and (in pursuance of the object of this Book) intended contrast with the conduct of His own people Israel in turning from Him to idols. These heathens, too, reverence and would fain save from death a prophet of Jehovah who has come to them unbidden, and has well-nigh compassed their destruction; Jerusalem "killed the prophets and stoned them that were sent unto her" for her salvation. They shew the utmost tenderness for a single life; Jonah, the prophet of the Lord, is worse than regardless of "more than sixscore thousand" human souls.

14. *for this man's life*] i. e. for having taken it away. Lit., **in** the life of this man, according to a well-known use of this Heb. preposition in the sense of 'in the place of,' 'in exchange for.' So Gen. xxix. 18, "I will serve thee for (lit. 'in,' in exchange for) Rachel;" and Deut. xix. 21, "life for (in) life," &c.

*lay not upon us innocent blood*] i. e. the guilt of having shed innocent blood. Comp. Deut. xxi. 8.

*for thou, O Lord, &c.*] The death of this man is no doing of ours. We are only carrying out Thy declared will. Hold us not, therefore, responsible for it. "That Jonah betook himself to this ship of ours,

thee. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the <sup>15</sup> sea: and the sea ceased from her raging. Then the men <sup>16</sup> feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows.

### i. 17—ii. 10. *Jonah's Prayer and Deliverance.*

Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up <sup>17</sup>

that the tempest was raised, that Jonah was taken by lot, that he passed this sentence upon himself, all this comes of Thy will."—Rosenm.

<sup>15.</sup> *they took up*] With respect and reluctance, with no struggle on his part, or violence on theirs.

*her raging*] Lit., *her anger*. "Maris ira," Ovid. *Met.* i. 330, "iratum mare," Hor. *Epod.* ii. 5, 6, are quoted by the commentators.

<sup>16.</sup> *feared the Lord exceedingly*] They had feared exceedingly before (*v.* 10, where the Heb. expression is the same as here), but their fear then was vague and indefinite, now it recognised as its object Jehovah, the God of Jonah.

*offered a sacrifice*] It would certainly seem to be implied, that immediately on the ceasing of the storm the sailors offered a sacrifice to Jonah's God, in acknowledgment of what He had already done, and at the same time vowed that they would present to Him other gifts and offerings when He should have brought them safe to land. We know but little of the ships of the ancients, but some of them were of considerable size, and there is no difficulty in supposing that there may have been one or more live animals suitable for sacrifice on board Jonah's ship.

### I. 17—II. 10. JONAH'S PRAYER AND DELIVERANCE.

Cast into the sea at his own request by the sailors, Jonah is swallowed alive by a large fish, and remains uninjured inside it for three days and three nights, i. 17. While there, he offers a prayer of thanksgiving to Almighty God (ii. 1—9), at whose command the fish, at the end of the three days and three nights, vomits up Jonah on the dry land, ii. 10.

<sup>17.</sup> *had prepared*] Rather: *assigned*, or *appointed*. (LXX. *προσέταξε*.) The same word and tense are used of the gourd, the worm, and the East wind, ch. iv. 6, 7, 8. They do not necessarily imply any previous or special *preparation*, much less the *creation* of these various agents for the purpose to which they were put; but merely that they were appointed to it by Him, whom "all things serve." He sent the fish there to do His bidding. The word is rendered "appointed" in Job vii. 3, Dan. i. 5, 10; and "set" in Dan. i. 11.

"By God's immediate direction it was so arranged that the very moment when Jonah was thrown into the waves, the 'great fish' was on the spot to receive him; God charged the animal to perform this function, as He afterwards 'spoke to' it (*v.* 10), or commanded it, to vomit out the prophet on the dry land."—Kalisch.

*a great fish*] Probably a shark. See note A.

Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days 2 and three nights. Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his 2 God out of the fish's belly, and said,

*three days and three nights*] At this point the transaction becomes clearly miraculous. The swallowing of Jonah by the fish may have been in the course of the ordinary working of divine Providence. His preservation within it for so long a time plainly belongs to that other working of Almighty God which, though it be no less after the counsel of that Will (Ephes. i. 11) which is the highest and only Law, appears to us to be extraordinary, and which we therefore call *miraculous*.

A comparison of 1 Cor. xv. 4 with Matt. xii. 40 shows that the period of Jonah's incarceration in the fish was divinely ordered to be a type of our Lord's being "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." This is the only passage in the O. T., if we except Hosea vi. 2, in which there is any prophetic intimation of the length of time between our Lord's burial and resurrection.

CH. II.—1. *Then Jonah prayed*] What follows, vv. 2—9, is rather a thanksgiving than a prayer. The same, however, may be said of Hannah's utterance (1 Sam. ii. 1—10), which is introduced by the same word ("Hannah *prayed*"). Comp. Acts xvi. 25, where Alford renders "praying, sung praises," or "in their prayers were singing praises," and remarks that "the distinction of modern times between prayer and praise arising from our attention being directed to the *shape* rather than to the essence of devotion, was unknown in these days: see Col. iv. 2." It has, indeed, been held (Maurer) that Jonah does pray here, and that the past tenses (v. 2, &c.) are in reality present and only in form past, because they are literal quotations from some of the Psalms. It is simpler, however, to suppose, with the great majority of commentators, that Jonah had prayed to God in the prospect and the act of being cast into the sea, while he was being buffeted by the waves and sinking into the depths, and in the agony of being swallowed by the fish. During all this time, whether his lips spoke or not, his mind was fixed in that intent Godward attitude and posture which is the truest prayer. Now, however, when he finds himself alive and unharmed in that strange abode, he prays no longer, but offers thanksgivings for the measure of deliverance already granted him in answer to those former prayers, mingled with joyful anticipations of the yet further deliverance which the last verse of the chapter records. It seems probable that Jonah's prayer was offered at the end of the three days and nights, and was followed immediately by his release. How the three days and nights were spent by him, whether in unconsciousness, as some have thought, or in godly sorrow and repentance, like Saul at Damascus, as others have held, we have no means of knowing.

*his God*] When Jonah flees in disobedience it is "from the presence of Jehovah;" when he prays in penitence, it is to "Jehovah *his God*." Comp. "O Lord my God," v. 6, and "*my God*," Psalm xxii. 1.

2. *and said*] The prayer which follows falls naturally into three parts or divisions. In each of these the two elements of danger and



I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me;

deliverance, of need and help, appear. But they enter into them in very different proportions. Faith grows, and the prospect brightens at each fresh stage of the hymn. The first rises to prayer, the second to confidence, the third to thankfulness and praise.

I. vv. 2—4.

- (1) Introduction, containing the general subject of the hymn: I cried and was heard, I was in trouble and was delivered.  
v. 2.
- (2) Description of the danger and distress. v. 3.
- (3) Faith triumphing over despondency and prompting to prayer.  
v. 4.

II. vv. 5, 6.

- (1) More vivid description of the danger and distress. vv. 5, 6a.
- (2) Deliverance not only prayed for, but possessed. v. 6b.

III. vv. 7—9.

- (1) Prayer, offered in danger and distress, has been heard. v. 7.
- (2) God, no longer forsaken, but sought and recognised as the fountain of mercy, has granted deliverance which shall be acknowledged with sacrifices of thanksgiving and vows joyfully paid. vv. 8, 9a.
- (3) All salvation, as this typical instance shows, is of God. v. 9b.

The prayer is remarkable for its many resemblances in thought and expression to passages in the Book of Psalms. The words of the Psalter, however, are not exactly and literally quoted, but its ideas and phrases are freely wrought into the prayer, as if drawn from the well-stored memory of a pious Israelite, familiar with its contents, and naturally giving vent to his feelings in the cherished forms, which were now instinct for him with new life and meaning. The manner in which our English literature (not only sacred, but secular and even profane and infidel) abounds in Scripture imagery and phraseology may help us to understand how coincidences of this kind may have arisen, without any deliberate intention on the part of a later writer to copy from an earlier, or even any direct consciousness that he was doing so.

by reason of mine affliction] Rather, as in E. V. margin, **out of mine affliction**, i. e. out of the midst of it, while it still compassed me about. The time referred to is when he was in the sea.

The first half of this verse is identical in the Heb. words, though not in their order, with Ps. cxx. 1, except that in the Psalm we have "in," instead of "from" or "out of" mine affliction, and a lengthened form of the word for affliction is used. The coincidence cannot, however, be properly said to affect the date of the Book of Jonah. The Psalm, it is

Out of the belly of hell cried I, *and* thou heardest my voice.

3 For thou hadst cast me *into* the deep, in the midst of the seas;

And the floods compassed me about:

All thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

4 Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight;

true, belongs to a collection which "in its present form must have been made after the return from Babylon," but it by no means follows that no ode of the collection had been composed before that time. Besides, the whole sentence is, both in language and idea, too commonplace, so to speak, to be safely insisted upon as a quotation at all. Two quite independent writers may easily have lighted on it. And moreover, if quoted at all, it may owe its origin no less probably to Psalm xviii., between which and the prayer of Jonah the resemblance, though less exact in this particular verse, is as a whole more close and striking. Comp. Ps. xviii. 6 (1st clause).

*of hell*] **The unseen world**, the place of the dead, amongst whom, when cast into the sea, he seemed already to be numbered. Comp. Ps. xviii. 5, "the sorrows of hell (or rather "the bonds of the unseen world") compassed me about."

3. *hadst cast*] There is no pluperf. tense in the Heb. language. There is no need, however, here to depart from the more literal rendering **castedst** or **didst cast**. See note on v. 1.

*the deep*] The same word is used (in the plur.) literally of Pharaoh and his host, Ex. xv. 5, "They sank into the bottom," and metaphorically, Micah vii. 19.

*the floods*] Lit., **the river**. Used of the *current* or *flowing* of the sea. "And the flowing (of the sea) surrounds me." Gesenius: 'das strömen.' The same word occurs in the same sense, Ps. xxiv. 2.

*All thy billows, &c.*] Lit., "**all Thy breakers and Thy long rolling waves.**" Comp. "Quanti montes voluntur aquarum." Ovid. *Trist.* i. ii. 19. The whole clause occurs again in Ps. xlii. 7, though there it is used metaphorically and here literally; or rather, to the metaphorical sense is here superadded the literal. For by calling them "*Thy*" breakers and waves, Jonah shews that to him, as to the Psalmist, the sense of God's punishment and displeasure was the soul of his affliction.

4. *Then I said, &c.*] The first clause of this verse may, perhaps, be a reminiscence of the first clause of Ps. xxxi. 22 (Heb. 23), though there the words "in my haste" are added, and a different verb ("cut off" instead of "cast out") is used. "Jonah substitutes the stronger word, *I am cast forth*, driven forth, expelled, like the *mire and dirt* (Is. lvii. 20), which the waves drive along, or like the waves themselves in their restless motion (*ib.*), or the heathen (the word is the same) whom God had driven out before Israel (Ex. xxxiv. 11), or as Adam from Paradise. (Gen. iii. 24.)"—Pusey.

Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

The waters compassed me about, *even* to the soul: 5

The depth closed me round about,

The weeds *were* wrapt about my head.

I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; 6

The earth *with* her bars *was* about me for ever:

*thy holy temple*] Not the heavenly temple or dwelling-place of God, but the literal temple. This is not, however, an expression of Jonah's confident belief that, outcast as he now seemed to be, he would certainly be delivered, and visit again, and behold once more with his bodily eyes the temple on Mount Zion. It is the then present thought and resolution with which, when he said "I am cast out of Thy sight," he corrected and overcame his unbelieving despondency. "One thing is left me still, one resource is still open to me, I will still pray, I will look (mentally) yet again towards Thy holy temple." The phrase "to look towards the temple," denoting prayer, has its origin in the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple. See 1 Kings viii. 29, 30, 48, and comp. Dan. vi. 10. The fact that Jonah was a prophet of the Northern Kingdom is no valid objection to this view. The Temple on Mount Zion was *the only centre* of the true worship of Jehovah, and was recognised as such by all faithful Israelites. But it would be enough to say with Calvin, "He had been circumcised, he had been a worshipper of God from his youth, he had been educated in the Law, he had been a constant participator in the sacrifices: under the name of the Temple he briefly comprehends all these things."

5. *compassed me about*] It would be better, perhaps, to render **surrounded me**, in order to show that this is a different word from that in v. 3, and then in the second clause of this verse, where the word is the same as in v. 3, to render **compassed me about**, instead of *closed me round about*.

*to the soul*] i.e. so as to endanger my soul, or life. Comp. Ps. lxi. 1 (where similar language is used figuratively) and Jer. iv. 10.

*the weeds*] The Heb. word is *sûph*, which so often occurs in the name *Red Sea* (lit., *sea of sûph*). "The *sûph* of the sea, it seems quite certain, is a seaweed resembling wool. Such sea-weed is thrown up abundantly on the shores of the Red Sea."—Smith's *Bible Dict.*, Art. *Red Sea*.

6. *bottoms*] Lit., as in margin, "**cuttings off**," the mountains being poetically conceived of as stretching away their roots or ridges to the lowest depths of the sea, and there ending or being cut off.

*her bars*] Lit., (as for) **the earth, her bars**, &c. The idea is that the gates of the earth were not only closed, but barred and made fast upon him, shutting him into the unseen world. The same word is used of Samson carrying away the gates of Gaza, "bar and all," i.e. probably a wooden beam used to hold fast the gates when they were closed. Judg. xvi. 3. Comp. "Let not the pit shut her mouth upon me," Ps. lxi. 15.

Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God.

7 When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD:

And my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

8 They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

*from corruption*] Rather, **from the pit.**

7. *fainted*] Lit., **covered itself**; with reference to the film and darkness that comes over eye and mind in fainting and exhaustion. Comp. Pss. cxlii. 3, cvii. 5, where the same Heb. word occurs.

*thine holy temple*] at Jerusalem, as in v. 4.

8. *observe lying vanities*] Comp. Ps. xxxi. 6, where the same Heb. word is rendered "regard." By "lying vanities" we are to understand "all inventions with which men deceive themselves" (Calvin), all false, and therefore vain and disappointing objects of trust and confidence. Idols and false gods are no doubt included, but the sentiment is conceived and expressed in the most general form, and therefore embraces Jonah's own case. He had observed the lying vanity, the deceitful promise of his own will and his own way, as opposed to God; and not only had he found that God was stronger than he, but he had been brought to see and confess that in such a course he had been his own enemy.

*forsake their own mercy*] Rather, **their mercy.** Some (as Kalisch, for example) would render, "they forget their kindness," i.e. "they quickly and heedlessly forget the mercies they have enjoyed; the word *forsake* being taken in the sense of *deserting*, or *dismissing*, viz. from their thoughts," and "*their mercies*," as analogous to the phrase, *the sure mercies of David* (Isai. lv. 3), "the benefits conferred upon or enjoyed by David." But, apart from the meaning thus arbitrarily given to the word "*forsake*," the sentiment attributed to the writer is unsatisfactory and untrue. "The suppliant declares," writes Kalisch, "I was in distress, I prayed and was saved; and now, unlike the idolaters who gracelessly forget the bounties they have received, I shall evince my gratitude to Jehovah by the voice of praise and by sacred gifts." But it is not true that the idolaters in this sense "forget the benefits they have received," as ch. i. 16 shows, and as the heathen temples filled with votive offerings in acknowledgment of deliverance abundantly testify.

By "*their mercy*" we are to understand God, who is the only source of mercy and loving-kindness to all His creatures. The sentiment is similar to that which is figuratively expressed by the prophet Jeremiah: "They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." (ii. 13.) So God is called, "*my mercy*," Ps. cxliv. 2 (*margin*), the same word being used as here.

But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanks-  
giving;

I will pay *that* that I have vowed.

Salvation *is* of the LORD.

And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out  
Jonah upon the dry *land*.

### 1—10. *Jonah's Preaching and its result.*

And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second 3  
time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, *that* great city, and 2  
preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah 3  
arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the

9. *But I*] in contrast to my former self, and to the whole body of those of whom I then was one, will humbly claim and gratefully acknowledge my share in "my Mercy." "I will sacrifice unto Thee," &c.

*Salvation is of the Lord*] Comp. Ps. iii. 8, Rev. vii. 10. This is at once confession and praise, a Creed and a *Te Deum*. It is the sum of his canticle, the outcome of all he has passed through. Deliverance in its fullest sense is already his in faith and confident anticipation. But God alone is the Author of it, and to Him alone shall the praise for it be ascribed. This point reached, Jonah's punishment has done its work, his discipline is at an end.

### CH. III. 1—10. JONAH'S PREACHING AND ITS RESULT.

Sent a second time by God on a mission to Nineveh, Jonah promptly obeys, vv. 1—3a. He enters into Nineveh and delivers his message, vv. 3b—4. The Ninevites believe God and repent, vv. 5—9; and are spared, v. 10.

#### 1—4. JONAH'S PREACHING.

1. *the second time*] Like St Peter (John xxi. 15—17), Jonah is not only forgiven, but restored to his office, and receives anew his commission.

2. *that great city*] Calvin explains this repeated mention of the greatness of Nineveh (comp. i. 2), as intended to prepare Jonah for the magnitude of the task before him, lest when he came face to face with it he should be appalled and draw back. But perhaps the true key is to be found in iv. 11, where the same expression "the great city" occurs as an argument for God's compassion. It is on no mean errand of mercy, not to save a few only from destruction, that I bid you go.

*preach unto it the preaching*] Lit., cry to it the crying. The word is rendered cry, i. 2.

3. *arose, and went*] Before, he *arose and fled*. He is still the same man. There is still the same energy and decision of character. But he is now "as ready to obey as before to disobey."

LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three

*was*] It has been asserted that the use of the past tense here, "according to all sound rules of interpretation, must be understood to imply that, in the author's time, Nineveh existed no longer," (Kalisch). Nothing, however, can safely be determined from the use of a tense in such cases. The clause "Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city," &c., is evidently a part of the narrative, and prepares the way for verse 4. It simply states what Nineveh was, and what Jonah found and saw it to be, when he visited it. It is not a historical note, like that which is introduced with reference to the building of Hebron, Numbers xiii. 22. St John writes (v. 2) "Now there *is* at Jerusalem by the sheep-gate a pool." It might be argued (as it has been) that because he uses the present tense, Jerusalem must have still been standing when he wrote his Gospel. Yet it might with equal force be concluded (and it is a proof of the unsatisfactory nature of this sort of criticism) that because he says that Bethany *was* nigh unto Jerusalem (xi. 18), that "Jesus went forth with His disciples over the brook Kedron, where *was* a garden" (xviii. 1), and that "in the place where He was crucified there *was* a garden" (xix. 41), the city and its environs were already laid waste when he wrote.

*exceeding great*] Lit., **great to God**. The expressions of this kind which occur in the Bible may be divided into two classes. They all alike spring out of the devout habit of the Hebrew mind, which recognises God in everything, and sees Him specially in whatever is best and greatest upon earth. But this habit of mind finds expression in two somewhat different ways. Sometimes, at the contemplation of what is more than ordinarily grand or beautiful, the pious mind rises at once to God, and recognises Him in His works. A thing so great, so fair, must be the work of His hands. "By the greatness and beauty of the creatures proportionably the Maker of them is seen."

"Who made you glorious as the gates of Heaven

Beneath the keen full moon?.....

God! let the torrents, like a shout of nations,

Answer! and let the ice-plains echo, God!"

Hence such expressions as "mountains of God," Ps. xxxvi. 6; "cedars of God," Ps. lxxx. 10; "trees of Jehovah," Ps. civ. 16; the explanation being added in the last of these instances (comp. Num. xxiv. 6), "which He hath planted." The other class of expressions are those in which the excellence of the object contemplated appears to suggest to the mind that it will bear the scrutiny of God's judgment, that even before Him, or as referred to Him, it is what the writer asserts it to be. To this class the expression here belongs. "Nineveh was a city, great, not only to man's thinking, but to God's." (Comp. ch. iv. 11.) In like manner we have, "a mighty hunter before the Lord," Gen. x. 9; "fair to God," Acts vii. 20.

*of three days' journey*] The most probable and most generally received opinion is that these words refer to the *circuit* of Nineveh, and that the



days' journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a 4

writer intends by them to say that the city was so large, that it would take a man, walking at the usual pace, three days to go round it. This would give about 60 miles for its circumference. See note B.

4. *And Jonah began to enter into the city*] Calvin well brings out the moral grandeur of the scene which this verse so simply and briefly describes; the promptitude of Jonah's action, in entering without delay or hesitation or enquiry, immediately, as it would seem, upon his reaching the city, upon his difficult and dangerous task; his boldness, as a helpless and unprotected stranger, in standing in the heart of "the bloody city," and denouncing destruction upon it. It was, indeed, to "beard the lion in his den" to adventure himself on such an errand into "the dwelling of the lions and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid." (Nahum ii. 11.)

*a day's journey*] "He began to perambulate the city, going hither and thither, as far as was possible, in the first day." (Maurer.) And as he went he cried. In him was personified the description of the wise King of Israel:

"Wisdom crieth without;  
She uttereth her voice in the streets:  
She crieth in the chief place of concourse,  
in the openings of the gates:  
In the city she uttereth her words,  
Saying,

.....  
Turn ye at my reproof."

Proverbs i. 20—23.

Some have supposed that, as a day's journey would suffice to traverse from one side to the other a city, of which the dimensions were such as have been assigned (v. 3) to Nineveh, and as, moreover, Jonah is found afterwards (iv. 5) on the east side of Nineveh (i. e. the opposite side to that on which he would have entered it in coming from Palestine), we are intended here to understand that he walked quite through the city in a single day, uttering continually as he went "his one deep cry of woe." The other view, however, is more natural, and it enhances the idea of the impressibility of the Ninevites, and their readiness to believe and repent, which it is evidently the design of the inspired writer to convey, if we suppose that while the preacher himself was seen and heard in only a portion of the vast city, his message was taken up and repeated, and sped and bore fruit rapidly in every direction, till tidings of what was happening came to the king himself (v. 6), and in obedience to the yet distant and unseen prophet, he issued the edict which laid the whole of Nineveh, man and beast, abashed and humbled before the threatened blow.

day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh *shall be* overthrown.

*Yet forty days*] "He threatens the overthrow of the city unconditionally. From the event, however, it is clear that the threat was to be understood with this condition, 'unless ye shall (in the mean time) have amended your life and conduct.' Comp. Jer. xviii. 7, 8."—(Rosenm.) God's threatenings are always implied promises.

*overthrown*] The word is the same as that used of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, both in the history of that event (Gen. xix. 25, 29), and in subsequent reference to it (Deut. xxix. 23 [Heb. 22]). Not necessarily by the same means, (comp. "overthrown by strangers," Isai. i. 7,) but as complete and signal shall the overthrow be. The use of the participle, lit., **Yet forty days and Nineveh overthrown**, is very forcible. To the prophet's eye, overlooking the short interval of forty days, Nineveh appears not a great city with walls and towers and palaces, and busy marts and crowded thoroughfares, but one vast mass of ruins.

It may be asked whether the whole of Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites consisted of this one sentence incessantly repeated. The sacred text, taken simply as it stands, seems to imply that it did. We have indeed here "the spectacle of an unknown Hebrew, in a prophet's austere and homely attire, passing through the splendid streets of the proudest town of the Eastern world;" but not (except so far as imagination completes the picture) of his "uttering words of rebuke and menace, bidding the people not only to make restitution of their unlawfully acquired property, but to give up their ancestral deities for the one God of Israel." (Kalisch.) To an oriental mind (and Almighty God is wont to adapt His means to those whom they are to reach) the simple, oft-repeated announcement might be more startling than a laboured address. "Simplicity is always impressive. They were four words which God caused to be written on the wall amid Belshazzar's impious revelry; *Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin*. We all remember the touching history of Jesus the son of Anan, an unlettered rustic, who, 'four years before the war, when Jerusalem was in complete peace and affluence,' burst in on the people at the feast of tabernacles with one oft-repeated cry, 'A voice from the East, a voice from the West, a voice from the four winds, a voice on Jerusalem and the temple, a voice on the bridegrooms and the brides, a voice on the whole people;' how he went about through all the lanes of the city, repeating, day and night, this one cry; and when scourged until his bones were laid bare, echoed every lash with 'Woe, woe, to Jerusalem,' and continued as his daily dirge and his one response to daily good or ill-treatment, 'Woe, woe, to Jerusalem.' The magistrates and even the cold Josephus thought that there was something in it above nature." (Pusey.)



### 5—10. *The happy Result of Jonah's Preaching.*

So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto 6

#### 5—10. THE HAPPY RESULT OF JONAH'S PREACHING.

5. *believed God*] Or, **believed in God.** Three things their faith certainly embraced. They believed in the God of the Hebrews, as the true God. They believed in His power to execute the threat which He had held out. They believed in His mercy and willingness to forgive the penitent. And this was marvellous faith in heathen, contrasting favourably with that of the chosen people. "So great faith" had not been found, "no not in Israel." What they knew of the Hebrews and their God (for doubtless they recognised in Jonah a *Jewish* prophet) may have contributed to the result. That they knew also the miraculous history of Jonah's mission to them, and so were the better prepared to credit him, appears to be plainly taught us by our Lord. It is difficult to understand how Jonah should have been "a sign unto the Ninevites," corresponding in any way to the sign, which by His resurrection the "Son of man" was to "the men of that generation," (Luke xi. 30 with Matthew xii. 38—41,) unless they were aware that he had passed, as it were, through death to life again, on his way to preach to them. How that information reached them we have no means of judging certainly. Of course it may have come to them from the lips of Jonah himself, though we have seen reason (see note on v. 4) to regard that as improbable. Alford speaks of "his preaching after his resurrection to the Ninevites, announcing (for that would necessarily be involved in that preaching) the wonderful judgment of God in bringing him there, and thus making his own deliverance, that he might preach to them, a *sign* to that people."

6. *For word came unto*] Rather, **And the matter reached.** The introduction of the word "for" for "and" in E. V. is of the nature of a gloss. Our translators appear to have taken the view that v. 5 states *generally* the effect of Jonah's preaching upon the Ninevites, and that vv. 6—9 relate more particularly how the fast mentioned in v. 5 was brought about. "They proclaimed a fast," I said, "and it was by a royal edict that they did so, *for* the report of what was going on was brought to the king, and he too was moved like his people, and both inaugurated in his own person and instituted by his authority a national fast." The statement in v. 5, however, is not necessarily proleptical. It may be intended by the writer to describe the effect produced in each district of the city as Jonah reached it, *before* the Court had any knowledge of what was going on. The people were first impressed, and then their rulers. The tide of penitence and humiliation rose higher and higher, till it reached and included the king and his nobles, and what had been done by spontaneous action, or local authority, received the final sanction and imprimatur of the central

the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered *him* with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused *it* to be pro-

government. Whichever view be adopted, the literal translation should be retained.

*he arose from his throne, &c.]* It is in favour of the view that the people did not wait for the royal edict to commence their fast, that the king himself seems to have been the subject of immediate and strong emotion, as soon as the tidings reached him. He first, as by a resistless impulse, humbled himself to the dust, and then took measures, out of the depth of his humiliation, that his subjects should be humbled with him.

The outward form which the humiliation both of king and people took was that common in the East (comp. Ezek. xxvi. 16; and see *Dictionary of the Bible*, Article *Mourning*), as we know both from sacred and secular writings. In the case of the king of Assyria it is the more remarkable both because of his characteristic pride as "the great king" (2 Kings xviii. 19, 28), and because of the pomp and luxury with which he was ordinarily surrounded. No greater contrast could well be conceived than between the royal "robe" and "sackcloth," or between the heap of "ashes" and the king's "throne." "In the bas-relief I am describing," writes Layard, "the dress of a king consisted of a long flowing garment, edged with fringes and tassels, descending to his ankles, and confined at the waist by a girdle. Over this robe a second, similarly ornamented and open in front, appears to have been thrown. From his shoulders fell a cape or hood, also adorned with tassels, and to it were attached two long ribbons or lappets. He wore the conical mitre, or tiara, which distinguishes the monarch in Assyrian bas-reliefs, and appears to have been reserved for him alone.....Around the neck of the king was a necklace. He wore ear-rings, and his arms, which were bare from a little above the elbow, were encircled by armlets and bracelets remarkable for the beauty of their forms. The clasps were formed by the heads of animals, and the centre by stars and rosettes, probably inlaid with precious stones." (*Nineveh*, abridged edition, 1851, p. 97.)

Of the throne the same writer says, "The thrones or arm-chairs, supported by animals and human figures, resemble those of the ancient Egyptians, and of the monuments of Kouyunjik, Khorsabad and Persepolis. They also remind us of the throne of Solomon, which had 'stays (or arms) on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood by the stays. And twelve lions stood there, on the one side and on the other, upon the six steps.'" 1 Kings x. 19, 20. (*Ib.* p. 164.)

*his robe]* The same word is used of Achan's "goodly Babylonish garment," Josh. vii. 21, which this may have resembled. But it is also used of a garment of rough hair-cloth, Gen. xxv. 25; Zech. xiii. 4, and of Elijah's hairy "mantle," or cloak, 1 Kings xix. 13, 19. The root-meaning of the word is size, amplitude.

claimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink

**7. and published]** This word is not a participle, though likely to be taken for one in the E. V. It is literally, "**And he caused a proclamation to be made, and said, &c.**"

*the decree]* The word here used is not properly a Hebrew word. It occurs frequently in the Chaldee of Daniel and Ezra to denote a mandate or decree of the Babylonish and Persian monarchs. Dr Pusey rightly sees in the employment of it here a proof of the "accuracy" of Jonah as a writer. He observes, "This is a Syriac word; and accordingly, since it has now been ascertained beyond all question that the language of Nineveh was a dialect of Syriac, it was, with a Hebrew pronunciation (the vowel points are different here from those in Daniel and Ezra), the very word used of this decree at Nineveh."

*and his nobles]* Lit., **his great men**, or *grandeesh*, Prov. xviii. 16. We have a similar association of his nobles with himself by Darius the Mede, when he caused the stone which was laid upon the mouth of the den, into which Daniel had been cast, to be sealed "with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel" (Dan. vi. 17). In the present case, however, it would seem that it was not in the exercise of a constitutional right, but by a voluntary act on the part of the king, that the nobles were associated with him in the edict which he issued. Kalisch observes, "It would be unsafe to infer from this passage that the nobles were in some manner constitutionally connected with the government of the kingdom, and thus tempered its arbitrariness, as we know now from the monuments, no less than from the records of history, that 'the Assyrian monarch was a thorough Eastern despot, unchecked by popular opinion, and having complete power over the lives and property of his subjects, rather adored as a god than feared as a man.'" (Layard, *Nin. and Babyl.* p. 632). May not this association of his nobles with himself have been "fruit meet for repentance," an abdication, in some sort, of the haughty arbitrariness of his power, an humbling of himself "under the mighty hand of God"?

*saying]* The decree, thus introduced, extends to the end of v. 9.

*man nor beast, herd nor flock]* The Hebrew word for "beast" here means tame or domestic animals, and probably refers only to "beasts of burden," horses, mules, and the like. So Ahab says to Obadiah when the famine was in Samaria, "peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we be not deprived of beasts" (1 Kings xviii. 5). "Herd and flock" will then be an additional clause, not amplifying, but distinct from "beast," and the covering with sackcloth, in v. 8, will thus be confined to those animals which were in man's more immediate use, and many of which, with their gay and costly trappings and harness, had been the ministers of his pomp and pride, or, as employed in war, had been the instruments of his "violence."

8 water: but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his

The extension of the fast to all, and of the sackcloth to some at least, of the animals in Nineveh, is probably without exact parallel in extant history. The *Speaker's Commentary* rightly points out that "the *voluntary* fasting of animals, wild as well as tame, at the death of Daphnis, described by Virgil, *Eclog.* v. 24—28, which has often been referred to, is plainly a mere poetic fancy." But the description in the text is quite in keeping with the common instinct and practice of mankind. Men have always been wont to extend the outward signs of their joy or sorrow to everything under their control. Our dress, our food, our houses, our equipage, our horses, our servants, all wear the hue of the occasion for which they are employed. "Man, in his luxury and pride, would have everything reflect his glory and minister to pomp. Self-humiliation would have everything reflect its lowliness. Sorrow would have everything answer to its sorrow. Men think it strange that the horses at Nineveh were covered with sackcloth, and forget how, at the funerals of the rich, black horses are chosen, and are clothed with black velvet" (Pusey). In the extreme case of Nineveh, the instinct may well have been indulged to an extreme. Like all other common instincts of our nature, it had a true origin, for the destiny of man and of the lower creation is inseparably connected (Gen. i. 26, 28; Rom. viii. 19—23). The effect upon the Ninevites of seeing "their deserts set before them as in a mirror or a picture" (Calvin), all that belonged to them involved with them, through their guilt, in a common danger with themselves—all creation, as it were, threatened and humbled for the sin of its lord—may well have been to incite them powerfully to repentance. The appeal to the compassion of Almighty God, who "preserveth man and beast" (Ps. xxxvi. 6; comp. ch. iv. 11), may well have been strengthened by the mute misery of the innocent beasts (Joel i. 20). But, apart from these considerations, the requirements of the history are fully satisfied by regarding the act of the king of Nineveh as instinctive, called for by the urgent circumstances of the case, and coloured by the demonstrativeness of oriental character.

8. *and cry mightily*] These words are to be restricted to "man." They do not include, as some have thought (comparing Joel i. 18, 20), "beast" as well. The addition "mightily" favours the restriction, and so also does the exact order of the Hebrew: "Let them be clothed with sackcloth, man and beast (the parenthesis is inserted here as qualifying what precedes only), and let them cry.....and let them turn," &c.

*let them turn*] The prominence of the moral element in the repentance of heathen Nineveh is very striking. Complete as was the outward act of humiliation, the king's decree implies that it would be worthless without a corresponding moral reformation. The tenth verse tells us that it was to this that God had respect, "He saw their works, that they turned from their evil way," and the heathen king seems clearly to have understood that it would be so. Here again, the favour-

evil way, and from the violence that *is* in their hands. Who <sup>9</sup> can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from his

able light in which these heathen show, in comparison with the chosen people, is most marked. Frequent and indignant is the remonstrance of the Hebrew prophets against the attempt of their countrymen to gain the favour or avert the displeasure of Almighty God by fasting and sackcloth, while the heart remained unchanged and the life un-renewed. "Is it such a fast that I have chosen?" is God's own indignant question to His people by the prophet Isaiah (ch. lviii.).

*the violence that is in their hands*] "Violence" was their chief sin, as all we learn of the Assyrians, both from sacred and secular history, shows. Comp. Nahum ii. 11, 12, iii. 1, and Isaiah x. 13, 14. The form of expression, *in their hands*, the hand being the instrument of violence, is the same as in Ps. vii. 3 (Heb. 4), and elsewhere.

9. *Who can tell*] Comp. Joel ii. 14, where the Hebrew is the same. Calvin well explains the doubtful form assumed by the king's decree. "How can it be," he asks, "that the king of Nineveh repented earnestly and unfeignedly, and yet spoke doubtfully of the grace of God?" I answer, that there is a kind of doubt which may be associated with faith; that, namely, which does not directly reject the promise of God, but which has other things as well in view..... No doubt the king of Nineveh conceived the hope of deliverance, but in the mean time he was still perplexed in mind, both on account of the preaching of Jonah, and on account of his consciousness of his own sins..... The first obstacle (to his immediate certainty of forgiveness) was that dreadful preaching, Nineveh after forty days shall perish..... Then again, the king, no doubt, when he pondered his sins might well waver a little."

*God will turn*] Lit., **the God**, i. e. the One supreme God. See note on i. 6, and comp. 1 Kings xviii. 39. This acknowledgment by the Assyrians of Jehovah, the God of the Jews, as "the God" is all the more remarkable, because, as Kalisch points out (though he unhappily sees in the description of this chapter, not an historical fact, magnifying the grace of God and the efficacy of true repentance, but the "aspiration" of a later writer for "that time when 'the Lord shall be One and His name One'"), it is contrary to all else we know of them. "The prophet Nahum declares distinctly, among other menaces pronounced against Nineveh, 'Out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image' (i. 14; comp. iii. 4); the Books of Kings state by name the Eastern idols Nibhaz and Tartak, Nergal and Ashima, Adrammelech and Anammelech (2 Kings xvii. 30, 31); in the remarkable account of Sennacherib's war against Hezekiah, the former, through the mouth of one of his chief officers, bitterly taunts the Hebrew king with his futile reliance on his national god, whose nature the Assyrian understands so little that, in his opinion, Hezekiah must have incurred Jahveh's wrath, for having deprived him of all the heights and of all the altars except that solitary one in Jerusalem; and he places, in fact, Jahveh on the same level of power with the gods of Hamath and



10 fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of

Arpad, or any Syrian idol (2 Kings xviii. 22, 30, 33, 34). And, on the other hand, all Assyrian monuments and records, whether of a date earlier or later than Jeroboam II., disclose the same vast pantheon which was the boast of king and people alike—Asshur, ‘the great lord ruling supreme over all the gods,’ with his twelve greater and four thousand inferior deities presiding over all manifestations of nature and all complications of human life; for the Assyrians at all times saw their strength and their bulwark in the *multitude* of their gods, and considered that nation feeble and defenceless indeed, which enjoyed only the protection of a single divinity.”

10. *that they turned from their evil way*] “See what removed that inevitable wrath. Did fasting and sackcloth alone? No, but the change of the whole life. How does this appear? From the prophet’s word itself. For he who spake of the wrath of God and of their fast, himself mentions the reconciliation and its cause. *And God saw their works*. What works? that they fasted? that they put on sackcloth? He passes by these and says, *that everyone turned from his evil ways; and God repented of the evil which He had said that He would do unto them*. Seest thou that not the fast plucked them from the peril, but the change of life made God propitious to these heathen? I say this, not that we should dishonour, but that we may honour fasting. For the honour of a fast is not in abstinence from food, but in avoidance of sin. So that he who limiteth fasting to the abstinence from food only, he it is who above all dishonoureth it. Fastest thou? Show it me by thy works.” St Chrysostom, *On the Statues*, Hom. iii. 4, quoted by Pusey.

*God repented*] When we regard the relations of Almighty God to men and His dealings with them *from the divine side*, so far as it is revealed to us and we are able to comprehend it, then they are all foreseen and planned and executed in accordance with His perfect foreknowledge. Then there is no place for repentance, no room for change. “Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.” But when we alter our stand-point, and regard them *from the human side*, when from the pure heights of contemplation we come down to the busy field of action, free scope is given in the aspect in which God then presents Himself to us for human effort and prayer and feeling, then His purpose waits upon our will. Both of these sides are freely and fearlessly set forth in Holy Scripture. On the one side, “God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent” (Num. xxiii. 19). With Him “is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James i. 17). On the other side we read, “It repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart” (Gen. vi. 6); “God repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them, and He did it not.” Both views are equally true, and they are in perfect harmony with each other, but Holy Scripture never attempts to harmonise them, nor is it

the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not.

### I—II. *Jonah's Displeasure, and its Rebuke.*

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very  $\frac{4}{5}$

wise for us to attempt to do so; we cannot look upon both sides of the shield at once.

*he did it not*] It is obvious that this statement, and indeed the whole account of the repentance of the Ninevites, is to be taken within the limits which the history itself prescribes. There is nothing here to contradict the subsequent relapse of the Ninevites into sin, their filling up the measures of their iniquities, and the consequent overthrow of their city and extinction of their national life. But none of these things are here in view, the present fills the whole picture, and fills it grandly. They are sinners. They are threatened. They repent. They are saved.

The fact that no reference has been discovered amongst extant Assyrian monuments to the mission of Jonah and its results may be reasonably accounted for. The Assyrian records of this particular period are singularly meagre in comparison of those of the immediately preceding and succeeding reigns. The subject-matter of this event in the national history is not such as the monuments are wont to record. Wars and victories and material works chiefly occupy them. Moral reformation is foreign to their theme. The marvellous manner in which recent discoveries have come in confirmation of the statements of Holy Scripture leave it open to us, however, to believe that some such confirmation of the history of Jonah may yet reach us from secular sources.

### CH. IV. 1—11. JONAH'S DISPLEASURE, AND ITS REBUKE.

Greatly displeased at the clemency of God towards Nineveh, Jonah confesses that it was the expectation that that clemency would be exercised, which rendered him unwilling to undertake the divine mission at the first, and in his annoyance and chagrin requests that he may die, 1—3. Met by the calm appeal to reason, which however he is in no mood to entertain, *Doest thou well to be angry?* Jonah goes out of the city, and constructs in the immediate vicinity a booth or hut, under the shelter of which he may dwell and watch, till the forty days are expired, what the fate of Nineveh will be, 4, 5. Intending to correct and instruct him by an acted parable, in which he himself should bear the chief part, God causes a wide-spreading plant to spring up and cover his booth with its refreshing shade. But scarcely has Jonah begun to enjoy the welcome shelter from the burning rays of the sun thus afforded him, when God, in pursuit of His lesson, causes the plant

<sup>2</sup> angry. And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray

to be attacked by insects, which rapidly strip it of its protecting leaves and cause it to wither away, 6, 7. Once again, the hand that governs all things sets in motion, like the blast of a furnace, the burning wind of the desert, and the sun's unbroken rays pour down on the now defenceless head of Jonah, so that faint and weary, beneath the weight of bodily distress and mental disappointment, he urges anew his passionate complaint, *Better for me to die than to live!* 7, 8. And now the parable is complete, and only needs to be applied and interpreted. Thou couldst have pity upon a short-lived plant, which cost thee and which owed thee nothing; thou art angry and justifiest thine anger, even unto death, for its loss; and shall not I, the Maker and the Lord of all, have pity upon a great city, which, apart from its adult population who might seem to have deserved their doom, numbers its six-score thousand innocent children, and "very much cattle"—they too "much better than" a plant? 9—11.

1. *it displeased Jonah, &c.*] Lit. **It was evil to Jonah, a great evil, and it (viz. anger) kindled to him.** Comp. Nehem. ii. 10. It is clear that the immediate cause of Jonah's anger and vexation was the preservation of Nineveh and the non-fulfilment of the threat which he had been sent to pronounce. It was the anticipation of this result, founded on the revealed character of God, that made him decline the errand at first (v. 2). It was the realisation of it that so greatly troubled him now. But why this result of his mission should have thus affected him it has not been found so easy to decide. Some have thought—but the view has nothing to commend it—that his annoyance was purely personal and selfish, and that he was stung by the disgrace of appearing as a false prophet in the sight of the heathen because his predictions had not been verified. Others with better show of reason have assigned to his displeasure the more worthy motive of jealousy for the honour of God, in whose name and with whose message he had come to Nineveh, and on whom he thought the reproach of fickleness and inconstancy would fall. "He connected," writes Calvin, "his own ministry with the glory of God, and rightly, because it depended on His authority. Jonah, when he entered Nineveh, did not utter his cry as a private individual, but professed himself to be sent by God. Now, if the proclamation of Jonah is found to be false, the disgrace will fall upon the author of the call himself, namely on God. There is no doubt, therefore, that Jonah took it ill that the name of God was exposed to the revilings of the heathen, as though He terrified without cause." It is far more satisfactory, however, to suppose that Jonah was displeased that the mercy of God should be extended to heathen, and especially to heathen who were the enemies and future oppressors of his own people, and that he himself should be the messenger of that mercy. This view falls in entirely with the exclusive spirit which marks the Old Testament dispensation, while it brings out into bold relief the liberal and Catholic spirit of the New Testament, which it is the object of this book to inculcate.



thee, O LORD, *was* not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou *art* a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore <sup>3</sup> now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for *it* is better for me to die than to live. Then said the LORD, <sup>4</sup>

2. *he prayed*] His better mind had not altogether forsaken him. He did not as before flee from the presence of the Lord, but betook himself to Him, even in his irritation and discontent.

*I pray thee*] A particle of entreaty. In I. 14 it is translated "we beseech thee."

*I fled before*] Lit. **I prevented or anticipated to flee.** That is, *I fled before something could happen.* LXX. προέφθασα τοῦ φυγεῖν. The ellipsis has been variously supplied. "'I anticipated or prevented (another charge) by escaping'; that is 'I fled before' another charge could reach me."—Kalisch. "I anticipated (the danger which threatens me) by fleeing to Tarshish."—Gesenius. "I hastened my flight."—Rosenmüller.

*for I knew, &c.*] In common with all Israelites Jonah knew the character of God to be what he here describes it, from His ancient revelation to Moses (Exodus xxxiv. 6), repeated frequently by prophets and psalmists (Numbers xiv. 18; Psalm ciii. 8, cxlv. 8), and renewed in exactly the same terms as here by the prophet Joel (ii. 13). Knowing that God threatens that He may spare, and warns that He may save, Jonah rightly understood from the first that his mission to Nineveh was a mission of mercy, and therefore he was unwilling to undertake it.

3. *take...my life from me*] So had Moses prayed (Numbers xi. 15) and Elijah (1 Kings xix. 4), both with better cause, and in nobler spirit, but both in the same utter weariness of life as Jonah. No one of them, however, attempts to take his own life. They all regard it as a sacred deposit, entrusted to them by God and only to be relinquished at His bidding, or in accordance with His will. Comp. v. 8 below.

4. *Doest thou well to be angry?*] Two other translations of these words have been suggested. One, which though perhaps possible is far-fetched and highly improbable, is, "Does (my) doing good (that is, to Nineveh in sparing it) make thee angry?" the reproof then being similar to that in Matthew xx. 15, "Is thine eye evil because I am good?" The other, which is given in the margin of our English Bibles, "Art thou greatly angry?" is fully borne out by the Hebrew, but, as has been truly said, it "is in this context almost pointless." But the rendering of the text is in accordance with Hebrew usage (comp. "They have well said all that they have spoken," Deut. v. 28 [Heb. 25]; "Thou hast well seen," Jer. i. 12) and gives a much more forcible sense. It is the gentle question of suggested reproof, designed to still the tumult of passion and lead to consideration and reflection. God does not as a judge condemn Jonah's unreasonable anger, but invites him to judge and condemn himself.

- 5 Doest thou well to be angry? So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see  
6 what would become of the city. And the LORD God pre-

5. *So Jonah went out of the city*] It has been proposed to take the verbs in this verse as pluperfects: "Now Jonah had gone out of the city, and abode on the east side of the city, &c." The verse will then be a parenthesis introduced to relate what had really taken place before Jonah's anger and complaint. In point of time it will precede the first verse of the chapter. It is doubtful, however, whether such a rendering is grammatically allowable; nor is there any reason for adopting it. The course of the narrative flows regularly on throughout the chapter. Jonah while still in the city comes to know that Nineveh will be spared. In bitter displeasure he complains to God, and is rebuked (vv. 1—4). Still cherishing the hope of vengeance, fostered possibly by the question in v. 4, which his distempered mind might interpret to mean, "Do not judge too hastily what My purposes may be," he will not abandon the city altogether. He will linger yet awhile in its precincts, and watch what its fate shall be.

*on the east side of the city*] where it was skirted by hills. Probably he chose some eminence from which he could command a view of the city.

*a booth*] of twigs and branches, such as the Israelites were directed to dwell in for seven days at the feast of tabernacles (Lev. xxiii. 42; Neh. viii. 14—16). Such were the "tabernacles" which St Peter proposed to make on the Mount of Transfiguration.

*till he might see what would become of the city*] We are not told whether this was before or after the forty days had expired. If it was before, then we must suppose that Jonah, and possibly the Ninevites also, had some direct intimation that God would spare the city, and that Jonah in his reluctance to accept the result still tarried in the neighbourhood, in the hope that on the appointed day the blow would fall. If however we suppose that the forty days had elapsed without the threatened judgment being executed, and that it was by this that Jonah and the Ninevites knew that God had repented Him of the evil, we can only conclude that Jonah hoped for some later punishment upon the people of Nineveh, provoked it might be by their speedy relapse into sin. "The days being now past, after which it was time that the things foretold should be accomplished, and His anger as yet taking no effect, Jonah understood that a respite of the evil has been granted them, on their willingness to repent, but thinks that some effect of His displeasure would come, since the pains of their repentance had not equalled their offences. So thinking in himself apparently, he departs from the city, and waits to see what will become of them."—St Cyr. quoted by Pusey.

6. *prepared*] Rather, *appointed*. And so in vv. 7, 8. See i. 17, note.

pared a gourd, and made *it* to come up over Jonah, that *it*

*a gourd*] This is the only place in the Old Testament in which the Hebrew word here translated *gourd* occurs. It is quite a different word which is rendered *gourd* in 2 Kings iv. 39, and (of architectural ornaments) in 1 Kings vi. 18 (margin), vii. 24. It is an old controversy, dating back as far as the times of Jerome and Augustine, whether Jonah's plant was a gourd or not. It is now generally admitted that it was not, but that the plant intended is the *ricinus communis* or castor-oil plant. This plant satisfies all the requirements of the history. The name *kikaion* here used in the Hebrew is akin to the word *kikeia* or *kiki* (Herodot. II. 94), which ancient authors tell us was used by the Egyptians and others for the castor-oil plant. That plant is a native of North Africa, Arabia, Syria and Palestine, and is said by travellers to grow abundantly and to a great size in the neighbourhood of the Tigris. It is succulent, with a hollow stem, and has broad vine-like leaves (much larger, however, than those of the vine), which from their supposed resemblance to the extended palm of the hand have gained for the plant the name of *Palma Christi*, or palmchrist. It grows with such extraordinary rapidity that under favourable conditions it rises to about eight feet within five or six months, while in America it has been known to reach the height of thirteen feet in less than three months. Jerome also bears testimony to the rapidity of its growth. It is, he says, "a shrub with broad leaves like vine-leaves. It gives a very dense shade, and supports itself on its own stem. It grows most abundantly in Palestine, especially in sandy spots. If you cast the seed into the ground, it is soon quickened, rises marvellously into a tree, and in a few days what you had beheld a herb you look up to a shrub."—Pusey.

*made it to come up*] Or, **it came up**. The naturally rapid growth of the plant was miraculously accelerated. As in other miracles of Holy Scripture Almighty God at once resembled nature and exceeded nature. "We know that God, when He does anything beyond the course of nature, does nevertheless come near to nature in His working. This is not indeed always the case; but we shall find for the most part that God has so worked as to outdo the course of nature, and yet not to desert nature altogether.... So too in this place, I do not doubt that God chose a plant, which would quickly grow up even to such a height as this, and yet that He surpassed the wonted course of nature." (Calvin.) In like manner, our Lord, when at the marriage-feast in Cana He turned the water into wine, "was working in the line of (above, indeed, but not across or counter to) His more ordinary workings, which we see daily around us, the unnoticed miracles of every-day nature." "He made wine that day at the marriage in those six water-pots which He had commanded to be filled with water, Who every year makes it in the vines. For as what the servants had put into the water-pots was turned into wine by the working of the Lord, so too what the clouds pour forth is turned into wine by the working of the same Lord. This however, we do not wonder at, because it

might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his  
 7 grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God  
 prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and  
 8 it smote the gourd, that it withered. And it came to pass,  
 when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east

happens every year: its frequency has made it cease to be a marvel.”  
 St Augustine, quoted by Trench *On the Miracles*.

*a shadow over his head*] His booth or hut, made as we have seen of  
 twigs and branches, the leaves of which would naturally soon wither,  
 was far from being impervious to the rays of the sun. The living plant  
 rising above the booth and covering it with its broad shadow would  
 prove a most welcome addition.

*from his grief*] Lit. **his evil**, the same word as in v. 1. The gloomy  
 and dissatisfied condition of his mind had been aggravated by physical  
 causes. The heat and closeness of his booth had added to the weariness  
 and oppression of his spirit. The palmchrist with its refreshing shade  
 by ministering to his bodily comfort had tended also to calm and soothe  
 the agitation of his mind. We need not look for any deeper meaning  
 in the words. It is surely a mistake to say that Jonah “must have  
 looked upon its sudden growth as a fruit of God’s goodness towards  
 him (as it was) and then perhaps went on to think (as people do) that  
 this favour of God showed that He meant in the end to grant him  
 what his heart was set upon.” (Pusey.) The object of the writer is  
 not to tell us what inferences Jonah drew from the sudden growth of the  
 plant, but what was the object and intention of Almighty God in  
 causing it to grow up over him. He sent it to refresh him as a step in  
 His lesson of correction and amendment; He did not send it to mislead  
 him. The force of the rebuke in verses 10, 11, in which the chapter  
 culminates and which turns entirely upon Jonah’s joy and grief for the  
 plant, is greatly weakened if we import into that joy and grief such  
 moral elements.

7. *a worm*] This of course may mean a single worm which either  
 by attacking the root or gnawing the stem, still young and tender and  
 not yet hardened by maturity, suddenly destroyed the palmchrist. It  
 is better, however, to take the word in its collective sense, *worms*, as in  
 Deut. xxviii. 39; Isaiah xiv. 11, and other passages. Thus the special  
 intervention of Almighty God again accommodates itself to nature.  
 “The destruction may have been altogether in the way of nature,  
 except that it happened at that precise moment, when it was to be  
 a lesson to Jonah. ‘On warm days, when a small rain falls, black  
 caterpillars are generated in great numbers on this plant, which, in one  
 night, so often and so suddenly cut off its leaves, that only their bare  
 ribs remain, which I have often observed with much wonder, as though  
 it were a copy of that destruction of old at Nineveh.’”—Pusey.

8. *a vehement east wind*] Margin, *silent*. This, or *sultry*, is probably  
 the true meaning of the word. “We have two kinds of sirocco,”  
 writes Dr Thomson, “one accompanied with vehement wind which

wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, *It is better*

fills the air with dust and fine sand.....The sirocco to-day is of the quiet kind, and they are often more overpowering than the others. I encountered one a year ago on my way from Lydd to Jerusalem. There is no living thing abroad to make a noise. The birds hide in thickest shades; the fowls pant under the walls with open mouth and drooping wings; the flocks and herds take shelter in caves and under great rocks; the labourers retire from the fields, and close the windows and doors of their houses; and travellers hasten, as I did, to take shelter in the first cool place they can find. No one has energy enough to make a noise, and the very air is too weak and languid to stir the pendent leaves of the tall poplars." *Land and Book*, pp. 536, 537. The occurrence of this wind at sunrise is referred to as a usual thing by St James, i. 11, where the same Greek word (*καύσων*) is used for "burning heat" as is used by the LXX. here.

*fainted*] It is the same word as occurs in Genesis xxxviii. 14, "*covered her with a veil*," veiled herself, the reference being either to the film that comes over the eyes in fainting and exhaustion, or to the clouding of the mental powers from the same cause. This word is used again of fainting from thirst in Amos viii. 13, and a similar word in the same metaphorical sense in ch. ii. 7 of this book, where see note.

*wished in himself to die*] Lit. asked for his life to die. Exactly the same expression occurs with reference to Elijah when he was fleeing from the wrath of Jezebel, 1 Kings xix. 4. The meaning of the phrase seems to be that the prophet, both in the one case and in the other, recognizing that his life was not his own, but God's, asked for it of Him as a gift or boon, that he might do with it what he pleased. Then the object with which he asked for it, the way in which he would have it disposed of, is expressed by the word "to die," or "for death." Hezekiah might have asked for his life, as indeed he did, in his grievous sickness, but it was not "to die," but "to live." The example of Elijah may perhaps have been in Jonah's mind when he penned these words, or even when he gave vent to his impatient desire to die. If the Jewish tradition that Jonah was the son of the widow of Zarephath and the "servant" whom he left at Beersheba, 1 Kings xix. 3, could be accepted, this would be the more probable. The cases of the two prophets were however in reality very different. Both were weary of life. Both desired to die. Both gave expression to their desire in the same words. But here the resemblance ends. Elijah's was a noble disappointment. "On Carmel the great object for which Elijah had lived seemed on the point of being realised. Baal's prophets were slain, Jehovah acknowledged with one voice: false worship put down. Elijah's life aim—the transformation of Israel into a kingdom of God—was all but accomplished. In a single day all this bright picture was annihilated." (Robertson.) But Jonah's was a far less worthy grief.



9 for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Doest  
 thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well  
 10 to be angry, *even* unto death. Then said the LORD, Thou hast

It was not that God's kingdom was overthrown in Israel, but that it was extended to the heathen world, that made him weary of his life. Elijah grieved because he had failed in his efforts to convert and save Israel; Jonah because he had succeeded in converting and saving Nineveh.

*It is better &c.*] The words "*It is*" which, as the italics in E. V. show, are not in the original, are better omitted: "*And said, Better for me to die than to live.*"

The excess of Jonah's joy and grief over the bestowal and loss of the gourd was partly due to his sanguine and impulsive character. But the influence here ascribed to physical circumstances over the mind, especially when it is burdened with a great grief, is very true to nature. "We would fain believe that the mind has power over the body, but it is just as true that the body rules the mind. Causes apparently the most trivial: a heated room—want of exercise—a sunless day—a northern aspect—will make all the difference between happiness and unhappiness, between faith and doubt, between courage and indecision." (Robertson.)

9. *even unto death*] "*Art thou rightly angry for the palmchrist? I am rightly angry, (and that) unto death.*" i. e. "my anger is so great that it well-nigh kills me, and even in that excess it is justified by the circumstances." In like manner it is said of Samson that "his soul was vexed unto death" by the urgency of Delilah (Judges xvi. 16), and our Lord exclaims in the garden, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matt. xxvi. 38), where Alford observes, "Our Lord's soul was crushed down even to death by the weight of that anguish which lay upon Him—and that *literally*—so that He (as regards His humanity) *would have died*, had not strength (*bodily* strength upholding His human frame) been ministered from on high by an angel, Luke xxii. 43." The question in its more general form, "Doest thou well to be angry?" (v. 4) is here narrowed to a single issue, "Doest thou well to be angry *for the palmchrist?*" And Jonah, in his unreasoning irritation, accepts and answers it on that single issue, and thus unwittingly prepares the way for the unanswerable argument which follows.

10, 11.] The final appeal is forcible and conclusive, a grand and worthy climax to this remarkable book. The contrasts are striking and designed: **Thou** and **I** (the pronouns are emphatic, and each of them introduces a member of the comparison), man and God; the short-lived palmchrist and Nineveh that great city; the plant that cost thee nothing, the vast population, the sixscore thousand children, the very much cattle, which I made and uphold continually. Jonah is met upon his own ground, the merely human sentiment of compassion, regard for what is useful and good after its kind, sorrow for its loss, unwillingness to see it perish. The higher moral ground is for the time abandoned.

had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, *that* <sup>11</sup> great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and *also* much cattle?

The repentance of the Ninevites is not brought into consideration. But the lower ground is a step to the higher. "The natural God-implemented feeling is the germ of the spiritual."

10. *for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow*] The principle on which the contrast implied by these words rests is that the effort which we have bestowed upon any object, the degree in which our powers of mind or heart or body have been expended upon it, in a word what it has cost us, is a measure of our regard for it. No claim of this kind had the plant on Jonah. No single effort had he made for it. He had not planted, or trained, or watered it, yet he pitied it, and mourned for its decay with a yearning tenderness. But on Almighty God, though the contrast is rather implied than expressed, all creation has such a claim in fullest measure. He "labours" not indeed; He speaks, and it is done; He wills, and it is accomplished. Yet in all things that exist He has the deepest interest. He planned them, He made them, He sustains them, He rules them, He cares for them. His tender mercies are over all His works. "This entire train of thought," as Kalisch well remarks, "is implied in the following fine lines of the Wisdom of Solomon: 'The whole world is before Thee as a drop of the morning dew; but Thou hast mercy upon all.....and overlookest the sins of men, in order that they may amend; for Thou lovest all the things that are, and disdainest nothing that Thou hast made. ...Indeed Thou sparest all, for they are Thine, O Lord, Thou lover of souls.' Wisd. xi. 22—26."

*came up in a night &c.*] lit. **was the son of a night, and perished the son of a night**, i.e. it came into existence and reached maturity (comp. for this sense of *was*, And God said Let light be, and light was, Gen. i. 3) in a single night, and no less rapidly (not literally in a single night, for it was when the morning arose) withered away.

11. *that cannot discern &c.*] The idea that the whole population of Nineveh is thus described, the reference being to their moral condition of heathen ignorance and darkness, has nothing to recommend it. On the contrary, the moral susceptibility of the Ninevites, although they are heathen, is, as we have seen, a prominent feature in the history. The reference is no doubt to the children of tender age who were as yet incapable of moral discrimination, and could not therefore be regarded as responsible agents. The same thought is expressed, without a metaphor, by the phrases, "having no knowledge between good and evil," Deut. i. 39; "Knowing to refuse the evil, and choose the good," Isaiah vii. 15, 16. Between these helpless and innocent children, together with the great multitude of unoffending animals which the

vast area of Nineveh contained, and the plant over which Jonah mourned, regarded simply as objects of human compassion, all moral considerations apart, the comparison lies.

Any attempt to compute the whole population of Nineveh from the data thus given must necessarily be precarious, from the difficulty of deciding at what age the line is to be drawn. But in any case the total would not be excessive, for the population of so large an area as we have seen that Nineveh enclosed.



## NOTE A. THE GREAT FISH.

THERE is no reason to suppose that the fish which swallowed Jonah was not naturally capable of swallowing him whole. The old objection, that it is said to have been a whale, and that the gullet of a whale is not large enough to allow of the passage of a man, rests, as is now generally known, upon a mistake. Jonah's fish is not really said to have been a whale. Even if it were, it might be urged that one kind of whale, "the sperm whale (*Catodon macrocephalus*) has a gullet sufficiently large to admit the body of a man" (Smith's *Bible Dict.*, Art. *Whale*), and that if whales are not now found in the Mediterranean, they may have been "frightened out of it" by the multiplication of ships, and may have been common there in Jonah's time, when "navigation was in its infancy, ships were few and small, and they kept mostly along the shores, leaving the interior undisturbed." (Thomson, *The Land and the Book*, pp. 68, 69.) But in fact the common idea of Jonah being swallowed by a whale has no real warrant in holy Scripture at all. Our Lord, indeed, is made to say in our English Bibles that Jonah was "in the whale's belly" (Matt. xii. 40); but the word (κῆτος) used by Him to denote Jonah's fish is taken from the Greek translation of the Book of Jonah, with which He and His hearers were familiar, and cannot be restricted to a whale, or to any of the so-called *Cetaceans*. It means "any sea-monster, or huge fish," and is used of a "seal, or sea-calf, and later especially of whales, sharks, and large tunnies." (Liddell and Scott, *Lex.* s. v.). The Bible then does not say that Jonah was swallowed by a whale. The O. T. simply speaks of "a great fish," and the N. T. employs a strictly equivalent term. Here we might be content to leave the question. We are not bound to show what the fish was. It is, however, interesting to enquire whether any particular fish can with probability be fixed upon, and the rather because the choice of an agent ready to hand and naturally fitted for the work accords with that "economy" of the miraculous which is characteristic of holy Scripture. Now it has been satisfactorily proved that the common or white shark (*Carcharias vulgaris*) is found in the Mediterranean, and well-authenticated instances have been given of its having swallowed men and other large animals entire. "A natural historian of repute relates, 'In 1758, in stormy weather, a sailor fell overboard from a frigate in the Mediterranean. A shark was close by, which, as he was swimming and crying for help, took him in his wide throat, so that he forthwith disappeared. Other sailors had leaped into the sloop, to help their comrade, while yet swimming; the captain had a gun which stood on the deck discharged at the fish, which struck it so, that it cast

out the sailor which it had in its throat, who was taken up, alive and little injured, by the sloop which had now come up. The fish was harpooned, taken up on the frigate and dried. The captain made a present of the fish to the sailor who, by God's Providence, had been so wonderfully preserved. The sailor went round Europe exhibiting it. He came to Franconia, and it was publicly exhibited here in Erlangen, as also at Nurnberg and other places. The dried fish was delineated. It was 20 feet long, and, with expanded fins, nine feet wide, and weighed 3924 pounds. From all this, it is probable that this was the fish of Jonah." (See Dr Pusey's *Commentary on Jonah*, Introd., pp. 257, 258; Smith's *Bible Dict.*, Art. *Whale*, where other instances are given.) There is another fish, of which the Norwegian name is Rorqual, i. e. *whale with folds*, which from its peculiar internal construction is thought likely by some commentators to have been the receptacle of Jonah. "The distinguishing feature of the whole genus is the possession of 'a number of longitudinal folds, nearly parallel, which commence under the lower lip, occupying the space between the two branches of the jaw, pass down the throat, covering the whole extent of the chest from one fin to the other, and terminate far down the abdomen;' in the Mediterranean species 'reaching to the vent.'" It has accordingly been suggested that "it may have been in the folds of a Rorqual's mouth, which in the case of an individual 75 feet long (such as was actually stranded at St Cyprien, Eastern Pyrenees, in 1828) would be a cavity of between 15 and 20 feet in length, that the prophet was imbedded." (*Speaker's Commentary* in loc., and *Encycl. Brit.* quoted there.) It would seem, however, that this Rorqual's throat is not large enough to swallow a man, so that on the whole it is most likely that Jonah's fish was a shark.

#### NOTE B. NINEVEH.

It is evidently the design of the writer of this Book to give prominence to the vast size of Nineveh. When he speaks of it, it is with the constant addition, "*the great city*," (i. 2; iii. 2; iv. 11), and the addition is justified by the statements that it was "great to God," that it was a city "of three days' journey," and that it contained "more than sixscore thousand persons unable to discern between their right hand and their left, and also much cattle" (iv. 11). In seeking to verify this description and to identify, with some reasonable degree of probability, the Nineveh of Jonah, we have first to determine what is meant by the expression "a city of three days' journey." It has been held that the "three days' journey" describes the time that would be occupied in traversing the city from end to end; along "the 'high street' representing the greatest length or 'the diameter' of the town, which ran from one principal gate to the opposite extremity." (Kalisch.) But unless we are prepared to regard the "figures given in the text" as

“the natural hyperboles of a writer who lived long after the virtual destruction of the city, and who, moreover, was anxious to enhance the impressiveness of his story and lesson, by dwelling on the vastness of the population whose fate depended on their moral regeneration” (Ib.), we shall find it difficult to accept the gratuitous assumption that Nineveh is here described as a city “about fifty-five English miles in diameter,” with a “high street” fifty-five miles long. Nor is it more satisfactory to suppose that by a city of three days’ journey is meant a city which it would require three days to go all over. No intelligible idea of size could possibly be conveyed by such a definition. Adopting, then, the more reasonable view that the “three days’ journey” refers to the circumference of the city, and estimating a day’s journey at about twenty miles, we have Nineveh here described as comprising a circuit of about sixty miles. Whether this large area was inclosed by continuous walls we cannot certainly say. One ancient writer, indeed, (Diodorus Siculus) asserts that it was, and that the walls were “100 feet high, and broad enough for three chariots to drive abreast upon” (*Dict. of Bible*, Article *Nineveh*); and he, moreover, gives the dimensions of the city as an irregular quadrangle of about 60 miles in circuit. But without relying too much upon his testimony, which may be regarded as doubtful, we may conclude that an area such as has been described was sufficiently marked out to be known and spoken of as the city of Nineveh. This vast area was not, however, completely covered as in the case of our own cities, with streets and squares and buildings. That was a feature unusual, and almost unknown, in the ancient cities of the East. It was perhaps the feature which, belonging to Jerusalem by virtue of the deep ravines by which it was surrounded, and which “determined its natural boundaries,” and prevented its spreading abroad after the fashion of other oriental cities, called forth the surprise and admiration of the Jews after their return from Babylon. “Jerusalem,” they exclaim, “(unlike Babylon where we so long have dwelt) is built as a city which is compact together.” Like Babylon, Nineveh included not only parks and paradises, but fields under tillage and pastures for “much cattle” (iv. 11) in its wide embrace. The most probable site of the city thus defined will be seen by reference to the accompanying plan. It lies on the eastern bank of the Tigris in the fork formed by that river and the Ghazr Su and Great Zab, just above their confluence. The whole of this district abounds in heaps of ruins. Indeed, “they are found,” it is said, “in vast numbers throughout the whole region watered by the Tigris and Euphrates and their confluent, from the Taurus to the Persian Gulf.” “Such mounds,” it is added, “are especially numerous in the region to the east of the Tigris, in which Nineveh stood, and some of them must mark the ruins of the Assyrian capital.” (*Dict. of the Bible*.) Four of these great masses of ruins, which will be found marked on the plan, Kouyunjik, Nimrud, Karamless, Khorsabad, form together an irregular parallelogram of very similar dimensions to those mentioned in the text. From Kouyunjik (lying opposite Mosul) on the Eastern bank of the Tigris, a line drawn in a S.E. direction, parallel to the course of the river, to Nimrud is about eighteen miles. From Nimrud, in a northerly direction, to Karamless is about twelve.

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The opposite sides of the parallelogram, from Karamless to the most northerly point Khorsabad, and from Khorsabad to Kouyunjik again, are about the same. These four vast piles of buildings, with the area included in the parallelogram which they form, are now generally identified with the site of the Nineveh which Jonah visited. For fuller particulars the reader is referred to Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, Article *Nineveh*, and to the well-known works of Mr Layard and Professor Rawlinson.

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# THE CAMBRIDGE BIBLE FOR SCHOOLS

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and the light it sheds upon the growth of religion amongst the Jews so interesting, that these elements ought to receive the largest share of an editor's attention."—*The Nonconformist*.

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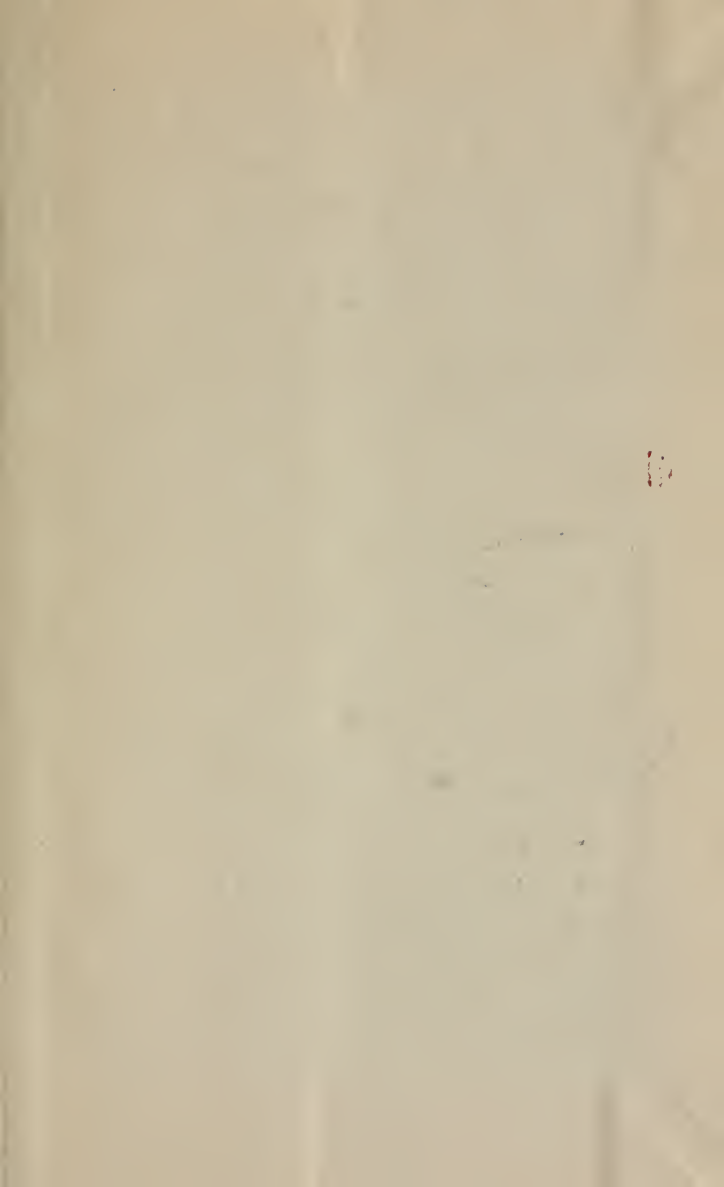
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